PERFORMATIVE SYMBOLIC RESISTANCE: EXAMINING SYMBOLIC RESISTANCE EFFORTS OF BLACK PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES THROUGH A NEW METHODOLOGICAL ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

by
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This dissertation introduces the concept of *Performative Symbolic Resistance (PSR)* as a way to describe and analyze the individual acts and performed by activists in their efforts to bring awareness to and combat social injustices. I define *Performative Symbolic Resistance (PSR)* as the use of a specific nonverbal motion(s) or act(s) as a languaging strategy to symbolize protest against a socially constructed system of oppression. This project situates *Performative Symbolic Resistance (PSR)* as 1) a denotative term used to name the strategy(ies) social activists use as they seek acknowledgement of and redress for social ills, 2) an illustrative term used to describe a strategy social activists use as they seek acknowledgement of and redress for social ills, *and* 3) an analytical tool that scholars of rhetoric and technical and professional communication (*TPC*) can use in their continued efforts to examine how performance, performativity, and symbolism *are* and *can be* used to engage in acts of resistance. It is based on the idea that an individual can use their physical body to perform resistance while simultaneously using specific spaces, and acts to 1) symbolize an idea or ideology and to 2) create or perpetuate a resistant rhetoric. I offer it as a tool that can be used 1) to acknowledge and privilege rhetorical acts by groups of people who are discounted and even demonized, and 2) to further decolonize the rhetoric often used to describe the acts of protestors and activists as they attempt to combat systemic and socially perpetuated oppressions.

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by
Alicia K. Hatcher
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DEDICATIONS

“I need to drive my two-year-old to daycare tomorrow morning. To ensure we arrive alive, we won’t take public transit (Oscar Grant). I removed all air fresheners from the vehicle and double-checked my registration status (Daunte Wright), and ensured my license plates were visible (Lt. Caron Nazario). I will be careful to follow all traffic rules (Philando Castille), signal every turn (Sandra Bland), keep the radio volume low (Jordan Davis), and won’t stop at a fast food chain for a meal (Rayshard Brooks). I’m too afraid to pray (Rev. Clementa C. Pinkney) so I just hope the car won’t break down (Corey Jones).

When my wife picks him up at the end of the day, I’ll remind her not to dance (Elijah McClain), stop to play in a park (Tamir Rice), patronize the local convenience store for snacks (Trayvon Martin), or walk around the neighborhood (Mike Brown). Once they are home, we won’t stand in our backyard (Stephon Clark), eat ice cream on the couch (Botham Jean), or play any video games (Atatiana Jefferson).

After my wife and I tuck him into bed around 7:30 pm, neither of us will leave the house to go to Walmart (John Crawford) or to the gym (Tshyrad Oates) or on a jog (Ahmaud Arbery). We won’t even walk to see the birds (Christian Cooper). We’ll just sit and try not to breathe (George Floyd) and not to sleep (Breonna Taylor).

These are things white people simply do not have to think about.”

-David Gray

Perspective from a Black Teenage Girl

“I am fierce and fearless. My ancestral African American and Native American blood pulses wisdom and discernment into me beyond my years. I see you. That deep-rooted hate in your heart. I am soon to be fifteen years old in just two days. I have encountered sexism and hate towards my features. When I was even younger, my full and plump lips were mocked. Time passed. I began observing others with lips and curves much like my own. I fully embraced the essence of my beauty. After all, people are paying out of pocket for lips like mine!

Now let’s get a few things straight for the ones that do not understand: Do you worry about your big brother’s trip to the market or corner store? Do you worry about being kidnapped and never looked for--only to be forgotten by society? Do you worry about your cousin receiving the best medical experience and care while she gives birth at the local hospital? Do your co-workers and supervisors label your natural hair texture or a hair style as unkempt, not professional?

Don’t you hate it when someone steals your ideas but hates you as a person? Do you hate it when people assume things about you just by looking at your skin? No, I’m not stereotyping you and then automatically labeling “Karen or VSCO girl”. I’m talking about “When I walk into this room do you think they’ll change their mind?” I am talking about being betrayed by a system that is supposed to protect all people. I am talking about the black people that have worried and lost their lives because the people that deem themselves superior have never thought to change the system that was built by the white men for the advancement of white men.

I am talking about a system that incarcerates black and brown marginalized citizens. I am talking about the system that was erected upon stolen land. I am talking about the privilege that some white people no discomfort with uttering the n- word. All protestors are not black. All protestors are not looters. Protestors are now looters? How do you think you got those artifacts held captive inside museums nationally and globally? Your explorers are looters. Who do you think built America? African muscle, tears, blood and sweat built this stolen America. We built this land and we have every right to burn it down. Oh no Target! Oh no Black Wall Street!

We are tired and we demand change. The only time ignorant people want to listen is when their favorite store gets looted. Then they use those few looters to define all the protesters. The same privileged people that use a few looters to define the protests are the same privileged people that say only a few cops don't define the whole justice system. "Those were my ancestors not me". Baby, we know that. We don't blame you for your ancestors' choices, but if your hearts continue providing refuge for hatred, then you perpetuate bigotry and contempt still. We are tired. POC and allies have been fighting for generations. We are tired. I struggle to understand why you don't love someone's character, integrity or just stick to minding your own business. Fox News, Kaitlin Bennet, or Trump and his cult are divisive, apathetic and comfortable with All Lives Matter. What I really do hope and desire is that you begin or continue to use your privilege and platform to stand with POC against injustice. Oh— and ICE we're coming for you next!"

Cloriesa Darden
Jacksonville, NC
Age 15

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Chapter 1: Contextualizing Performative Symbolic Resistance

Introduction

On November 30, 2020, the Professional and Technical Writing Program in the Virginia Tech Department of English held a virtual event titled *Black Technical and Professional Communication,* which was "a response to national calls for action against anti-Blackness and white supremacy across domains, especially those that arose in response to the unjust and brutal murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Tony McDade" (Black Technical and Professional Communication). During this conversation, Dr. Cecilia Shelton responded to Elizabeth Britt's (2006) argument that "technical communication is how institutions and organizations define themselves and do their cultural work," stating the following:

> Tech comm provides the infrastructure for these [institutional/organizational] systems to operate and reproduce themselves. So if that's true, then shouldn't we pay attention to the infrastructures for systems and strategies of resistance so that we can understand who is building them and how they're building them? And shouldn't we pay attention to how these infrastructures [for systems and strategies of resistance] get replicated and taken up in other justice movements?

Looking at our country as the overarching system, the work that follows attempts to do both—to "pay attention" to the specific social and societal systems that have built and continue to maintain existing infrastructures that are detrimental to marginalized populations, and to "pay attention" to how specific systems and tactics *of resistance* work to contest—and hopefully dismantle—those specific infrastructures.

One notable example of this type of effort that caught public attention occurred in 2016 when Colin Kaepernick, a quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, chose not to stand for the national anthem at his team's football games. Initially, he sat, unnoticed. But then he began to kneel to protest the killing of Black people during police encounters. Kaepernick's actions, while highly publicized due to his status as a professional football player, are not new nor are they unique. They are the continuation of an already existing outcry in this country against police brutality and the killings of Black people at the hands of law enforcement. They exist as corporeal demonstrations of what Young (2003, 2004, 2007) refers to as "the burden of racial performance," which he describes as "the demand to prove what type of black person you are" (2003, p. 207).[1] If we take a look at popular public discourse about the issue of Black people being killed during police encounters, we can see evidence of this outcry often in the form of visual and virtual rhetorics that include hashtags such as #Blacklivesmatter and #Staywoke. We can also see evidence of these continuous efforts of Black people to perform Blackness—or in this case to demonstrate their connection to a specific Black consciousness—in the videos or images of protest events staged by activists concerned with the plight of those in marginalized communities. These demonstrations are efforts to make hidden exigencies apparent (Frost, 2016), and they are attempts for people who have been systemically dismissed, deemed as unimportant, or even considered non-existent to make themselves apparent.

One of the more notable responses to Kaepernick's protest efforts came from former President Donald Trump. On September 22, 2017, while at a campaign rally in Huntsville, Alabama, Trump stated, "Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners,

[1] Young uses the terminology "burden of racial performance" to describe the problem Black people face when their performances are sometimes read as protests when examined through a literacy framework. Even though I see this way of examining racial performance as foundational to my work, my current project examines these performances through a Black bodies/rhetorical framework and not a literacy framework.

when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'Get that son of a bitch off the field right now, out. He's fired. He's fired!'" During his presidency, Trump continued an unrelenting tirade against Kaepernick and his protest efforts. In 2016, during a radio interview with KIRO radio host Dori Monson, Trump was asked if he was following Colin Kaepernick's refusing to stand for the anthem. Trump replied that "…maybe he [Kaepernick] should find a country that works better for him" (Monson, 2016).

During a 2017 interview with Sean Hannity, Trump stated the following:

> I watched Colin Kaepernick, and I thought it was terrible, and then it got bigger and bigger and started mushrooming, and frankly the NFL should have suspended him for one game, and he would have never done it again. They could have then suspended him for two games, and they could have suspended him if he did it a third time, for the season, and you would never have had a problem. But I will tell you, you cannot disrespect our country, our flag, our anthem — you cannot do that. (Fox News, 2017)

The language used by Trump is indeed troubling because it represents the government's and governmental officials' blatant attempts to create a rhetorical re-shaping of the protest narrative and of the protestors involved. This re-shaping is problematic for 3 specific reasons:

1. It is dismissive of the actual cause for which the protestor is advocating.
2. It is an active attempt to denigrate and debase the protestor in the minds of national and international audiences.
3. It serves as a rhetorical footing upon which white supremacists stand to justify their racist actions.

Now let's bring this conversation forward in time. In the first 8 months of 2020, 164 Black people were killed by police officers (Cohen, 2020). One of the most notable—and that

sparked protests around the world—was the killing of George Floyd on May 25th, 2020. 8 minutes and 46 seconds—the amount of time Derek Chauvin was thought to have knelt on Floyd's neck—came to symbolize police brutality. As protests occurred across the country, Donald Trump threated violence against them, responding with the following words: "When the looting starts, the shooting starts" (Trump, 2019).

Scholars of rhetoric and technical and professional communication (*TPC*) have been attempting to use their platforms to reveal, combat, and counter this type of derisive, divisive rhetoric, doing so in a variety of ways. Often this begins by simply sharing one's experiences. Ore's (2014) discussion about her horrific encounter with police as a result of walking while Black, Riley-Mikavetz's (2016) conversation about working "from" or "With" anger, and Dougherty's (2016) work on excavating, acknowledging, and addressing our past are responses to oppressive social systems, both historic and contemporary. Each author's experience speaks to the power of and need for "spective" associations—intro, retro, or both—and their individual works demonstrate the necessity of connecting our everyday experiences and experiential knowledge—even (or perhaps especially) the negative—to our research and scholarship. Their work helps us consider/reconsider how experiences, emotions, and new-found knowledge provide opportunities for us to examine and re-examine ourselves, our cultures, and our society(ies), speaking to Dougherty's notion that "even the ugliest of stories are instructive" (Dougherty, 2016).

Another method scholars of rhetoric and *TPC* are using to push back against the negative rhetoric is to focus on the rhetorical tools and strategies used by those from marginalized communities in their efforts to gain some degree of societal and/or communal redress. Because the lack of equity and power—social, economic, material—lies at the heart of this quest,

members of these communities must take a "rasquachean"[2] approach, an approach which "encourages practitioners to use what they have at hand" (Medina-López, 2018). In many cases, what are at hand are our physical bodies and the spaces and places in which they inhabit. When Santos Ramos used his body to block the flow of traffic on the university campus for 4.5 minutes (representing the 4.5 hours Michael Brown's body was left in the street after he was killed), he did so in an effort to "challenge the stability" (Medina-López, 2018) of the university campus (Ramos, 2016). And when Bratta (2015) described the "Laying of the Bones Performance" and the "Reclaiming of the Bones Performance" symbolizing the victims of genocide, he did so to demonstrate how lived events, bodies, and spaces and places work together, demonstrating that "lived events contribute to new political and rhetorical actions in public space" (Bratta, 2015). Each of the aforementioned scholars used their scholarship to not only examine some contentious aspect of our world but to also offer up truer ways of understanding these events. They did this by centering the experiences of the victims in order to provide a more accurate narrative of each event.

I contend that one way for us to do this continuous work of confronting and combating the on-going issue of demonization that often occurs when marginalized communities perform acts of resistance is to continue the work of decolonizing language used to describe activists and their protest efforts. When I use the phrase "decolonizing language," I mean that we—as scholars of rhetoric and *TPC*—must continue our efforts at 1) decentering/displacing and 2) countering the negative language often used by those in power to describe activists and their activism. One of the ways that we do this is by offering additional ways to analyze, discuss, and describe these

[2]In the article "Rasquache Rhetorics: A Cultural Rhetorics Sensibility," Kelly Medina-Lopez draws from Tomás Ybarra-Frausto's definition of rasquache, which he refers to as "an underdog perspective" that stresses making do "in an environment always on the edge of coming apart [where] things are held together with spit, grit and movidas" ("Rasquachismo: A Chicano sensibility," 1989, p. 5).

activists and their efforts. In "Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: A Case Study of Decolonial Technical Communication Theory, Methodology, and Pedagogy, Haas (2012) stated that "…for decolonial ideologies to emerge, new rhetorics must be spoken, written, or otherwise delivered into existence" (p. 287). The need for "new rhetorics" is what I refer to as a "rhetorical lacking," and this need was also expressed by Butler (2015) in *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* when she explored the relationship between the human body, infrastructures, and the political struggle. She wrote, "I'm using one word after another, searching for a set of related terms as a way of approaching a problem that resists a technical nomenclature; no single word can adequately describe the character and the aim of this human striving, this striving in concert or this striving together that seems to form one meaning of political movement or mobilization" (p. 133). I agree with Butler—there is no single word that can do this work—the work of fully encapsulating the breadth and depth of human body's relationships to infrastructures and that speaks to their co-dependency in meaning making *while simultaneously* speaking to a personal and collective yearning strong enough to propel thinking into activism. And perhaps one word will always be too small to express these ideas comprehensively and simultaneously. And perhaps it would be asking too much of a single word to do this all-inclusive work, the work of encapsulating and providing us with the breadth and scope—or the totality, if you will—of what occurs when bodies, infrastructures, and political struggles meet.

Scholars in rhetoric and *TPC* recognize that this gap in our fields' language—this rhetorical lacking—exists, a gap/lacking that proves problematic when doctoral students like myself attempt to enter scholarly conversations. The response has been a continuous offering of new language and terms that speak to the diverse ways scholars see, know, comprehend, and express. McCoy's (2019) work on amplification rhetorics, Shelton's (2019) research introducing

a techné of marginality, and Davis' (2018) research introducing memetic rhetorical theory are prime examples of doctoral students encountering rhetorical limitations when attempting to contribute to the body of scholarly work in rhetoric and *TPC*. In addition, Ridolfo and DeVoss' (2019) work on rhetorical velocity, Frost's (2016) work introducing apparent feminism, Jones, Moore, and Walton's (2016) work introducing the antenarrative, and Frost and Eble's (2015) work on technical rhetorics further demonstrate the need for a continuous expansion of scholarly language in rhetoric and *TPC*. With this in mind, the purpose of this dissertation is to offer new language—*Performative Symbolic Resistance*—that scholars of rhetoric and *TPC* can use as an additional rhetorical tool in their continued efforts at understanding, countering, decentering, and deconstructing the negative language often used by those in power to describe resistant acts. The next section provides an overview of *Performative Symbolic Resistance (PSR)*, explaining what it is, what it does, and how it can be deployed. This overview includes an illustration and description of *The PSR Puzzle*, which establishes the criteria for determining if a protest can be considered *PSR*. This is followed by explanations of my data collection process and my method of analysis. The final section of this chapter discusses the third and final exigency for *PSR*'s creation—the broad academic exigency—exploring why the fields of rhetoric and *TPC* need *PSR*.

Performative Symbolic Resistance Overview

In order to understand what *PSR* is, it is important to understand the evolution of my thinking about this concept. When I initially began developing *PSR,* I was, essentially, working backwards. I had seen Kaepernick's resistant act and was struggling to come up with what to—quite simply—call it. This was important to me because I was acutely aware of the fact that the language being used to describe resistant acts and those who engage in them often came from a

hierarchical, heteronormative, and patriarchal vantage point, resulting in the continuous perpetuation of negative rhetoric designed to disparage protestors and their resistant acts. However, the more I examined his specific protest, the more I came to recognize that his protest involved more than just the act of sitting or kneeling. My initial thoughts were that 1) he was using the football field sidelines as his "stage" (performance); 2) he was performing the act of kneeling (symbolic); and 3) his act was a way to protest the killing of Black men in the United States and the systems that allow these killings to be/remain commonplace (resistance). Therefore, what I called or named it had to speak to the fact that his protests were multi-faceted and multi-layered. This resulted in me coming up with the phrase *Performative Symbolic Resistance (PSR)* and defining it as the use of a specific nonverbal physical motion or act as a languaging strategy that symbolizes protest of a socially constructed system of oppression. It was based on the idea that an individual can use their physical body to perform resistance while simultaneously using specific symbolic acts to 1) represent an idea or ideology and to 2) create or perpetuate a resistant rhetoric. This initial definition was limited contextually in that it focused specifically on what Kaepernick was doing and why he was doing it. He and his specific acts were the lens.

However, once the term—this new language for describing resistant acts—actually existed, I realized that Kaepernick's act was no longer the lens—*PSR* was. I recognized that the term could be more than just a way to name one specific act or one specific person's protest acts. As a result, my way of explaining the term had to also shift. I needed to describe it—what it was, what it did, and how it could be deployed. The previous basis for determination—that an individual can use their physical body to perform resistance while simultaneously using specific symbolic acts to 1) represent an idea or ideology and to 2) create or perpetuate a resistant

rhetoric—is still an inherent part of *PSR*'s definition; however, the definition and description was developed even more as I shifted my focus to theorizing the term itself. It is this theorization, which I discuss in chapter 2, that has enabled me to consider how *PSR* might be used *outside* of the one specific kneeling act performed by Kaepernick and *in addition to* the scholarship surrounding decolonial language. This focus shift led to the additional description of *PSR*:

> Part methodology and part analytical framework, *Performative Symbolic Resistance* does the following 3 things: 1) serves as a denotative term used to name the tactic[3](s) social activists use as they seek acknowledgement of and redress for social ills, 2) serves as an illustrative term used to describe the tactic(s) social activists use as they seek acknowledgement of and redress for social ills, and 3) serves as a methodological analytical tool that scholars can use in their continued efforts to examine how performance, performativity, and symbolism *are* and *can be* used to engage in tactical acts of resistance.

For example, let's briefly consider Kaepernick's activism as *PSR.* By naming/denoting it as an act of *Performative Symbolic Resistance*, we automatically shift its description/illustration. The term *PSR* also serves as a methodological lens for analyzing each element of his protest, opening the door to new ways of describing, discussing, and understanding his activism—activism that was previously described in negative terms (e.g. as un-American).

In order to determine whether or not a resistant act can be labeled as *Performative Symbolic Resistance* or can be analyzed through the *Performative Symbolic Resistance* lens, it will need to be examined based on the following criteria found on *The Performative Symbolic Resistance*

[3] A thorough discussion of my choice to use the term "tactic" (as opposed to "strategy") can be found later in this section.

Puzzle illustrated below:

The Performative Symbolic Resistance Puzzle: Who, What/How, When, Where, Why, plus Intentionality+Why

PSR is constrained by *who* can perform the protest, *the manner* in which it is performed, and *the intent* behind it. That distinguishes *PSR* as its own unique *type* of protest. People protest in a variety of ways (marches, sit-ins, demonstrations, strikes, petitions, etc.); however, *PSR* is a specific *type* of protest with its own unique criteria for determination. Protest acts construed as *PSR* must have the following characteristics:

1. The act must be non-verbal.
2. The/A marginalized body must be used to perform a symbolic act.
3. The act must be performed in a White-dominant space or place.
4. The act must transform the meaning of the space, allowing it to be used symbolically.
5. The act must be performed by a member of/members of a marginalized community.
6. The act must be intentional, performed with a specific goal or purpose in mind.

The elements of *The PSR Puzzle* below allow us to determine whether a specific resistant act meets the criteria for *PSR*.

Who—is performing the resistant act? *Who* refers to someone who does not hold power in the traditional sense—someone whose voice has been historically muted, leading to their inability to

attain economic, social, and/or political power. Because of *who* they are and their place in society, their ability to have their grievances heard, legitimized, and ultimately addressed have been thwarted. We typically refer to these groups as *marginalized populations* because they exist on the margins of our societies, meaning that they are not simply excluded from the power itself, but that they are also excluded from access to the methods that could potentially afford them with opportunities to attain power.

What—are they doing during this performance? *How*—is this resistant act being conducted? This aspect of *PSR* pertains specifically to the physical act (as opposed to the metaphorical act). The *what* here refers specifically to the performer's use of their physical body to engage in a symbolic act. Within the context of *PSR*, the *how* is in the form of a non-verbal act.

When—is this resistant act performed? This refers to chronological time and kairotic time.

Where—is this resistant act performed? The location of the act must be a White-dominant space. The space can be either physical or virtual, as long as there is a public who can access and engage with the act.

Why—is this resistant act being performed? More specifically, what is/are the precipitating act(s)?

This aspect of *PSR* pertains to the events—both specific and collective—that shape the performer's consciousness in such a way that they are compelled to engage in an act to demonstrate their stance on the issue at hand.

Even though the "5Ws and 1H" address the majority of the elements of *Performative Symbolic Resistance*, there is the additional required element of *intentionality*.

Intentionality+Why

What are the performer's intentions? What is their purpose for engaging in the resistant

act? Whereas the *why* in *The PSR Puzzle* focuses specifically on what events precipitated or preceded the resistant act, the notion of *intentionality+why* shifts the focus from *why* in terms of specific and collective precipitating events (i.e. what happened?) to viewing *why* in terms of the activist's intended purposes for engaging in *PSR* (i.e. Why am I engaging in this act? What am I hoping to achieve?).The purpose/intent of the act should be three-fold: 1) it is an *individual* protest designed to demonstrate what the performer perceives to be a *specific* social injustice or the *perpetuation* of a social injustice; 2) it is an attempt to demonstrate a connection to a specific meta-conceptualization (to be discussed in chapter 2), thereby, connecting with others who share the same grievances; 3) it is a hopeful act, one conducted in an effort to be heard by those in power in hopes that they will, ultimately, enact social reforms. Is the act performed with a specific purpose in mind*?* The act(s) is/are intentionally performed due to an understanding of its rhetorical (communicative and persuasive) value and its ability to draw attention to the issue at hand. (Note: Even though some rhetorical theorists may take issue with my including intentionality here, I contend that I am identifying these acts not (just) as rhetorical acts but, more specifically, as acts of resistance. Rhetorical performance and intent are—within the context of *Performative Symbolic Resistance*—inextricably linked. It is the intentionality behind the acts being performed that allows the body and spaces to be used for argumentation and meaning making.)

I think it is important for me to clarify my choice to use the word *tactic*—as opposed to *strategy*—to characterize acts of *PSR*, especially in light of the fact that they are often discerned to have the same meaning and, thus, used interchangeably. My definition of *tactic* is from de Certeau's (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*, in which he defined a *tactic* as "a calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' emphasizing the notion that "The place of a tactic belongs to

the other" (xix). By a 'proper,' de Certeau was referring to physical spaces and locales where marginalized peoples do not typically wield power.[4] Kimball (2017) offered a succinct way of viewing de Certeau's distinction between strategy and tactic, stating, "According to de Certeau, strategies are the actions of institutions, whereas tactics are the operations of individuals. Strategies are best understood as attempts to control individual agency through systems of rules, conventions, and expectations" (p. 3). This is an important distinction to consider when examining acts of resistance through the *PSR* lens because it acknowledges two important concepts that inform *PSR*: 1) the concept of the "other," and 2) the concept of a 'proper', which pertains specifically to places and spaces and what they represent or symbolize. Even though our concept of "other" is often generalized to include anyone excluded from traditional power systems (e.g. as a result of classism, racism, ableism, etc.), it is important to see "other" and the use of tactics (tactical use of the body and spaces and places) contextually when connecting them to *PSR*.

Thus far I've discussed two specific exigencies that led me to create *PSR*: the broad social exigency that was the impetus for Kaepernick's resistant act, that being the continuous killing of Black people by police and the lack of accountability, and my personal academic exigency of not having language at my disposal that would allow me to adequately and accurately analyze Kaepernick's resistant act. The following section will detail my data collection process and my method of analyzing the data followed by a section discussion an additional exigency, the broad academic exigency.

The Data Collection Process

The data collection process began in the Fall of 2017 during a course titled "Seminar in

[4] An in-depth discussion about White spaces/White-dominant spaces can be found in chapter 3.

Rhetorical Theory" taught by Dr. Wendy Sharer. The purpose of the course was to help us develop a deeper, more nuanced understanding of activism by considering its rhetorical nature. Below is an excerpt from the Course Description from the syllabus:

> This course examines rhetorical practices of activism, focusing specifically on the rhetorical practices through which social movement groups organize numerous and often geographically distant supporters, generate broader awareness of and interest in their causes, and defend their positions from the attacks of opponents. Drawing on examples from various social movements, we will explore how grassroots groups and non-governmental organizations use texts and technology to mobilize, popularize, and (sometimes) create change. (p. 1)

At that time the activist efforts of Kaepernick, a (former) quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, were still a point of contention for many people even though he was no longer playing football professionally. I decided to use this example of social activism as the foundation for my seminar project. As such, it serves as part of my "data" for analysis through the lens of *PSR*.

Figure 1. Image of Kaepernick sitting during the national anthem before an NFL preseason game against the San Diego Chargers.

Figure 2. Image of Kaepernick performing kneeling protest

The remaining data I analyze through the *PSR* lens are 1) **From 2014:** Derrick Rose wearing a t-shirts with the phrase "I Can't Breathe" in protest of Eric Garner's death resulting from a police chokehold, and 2) **From 2020**: Naomi Osaka wearing 7 different black face masks at the U.S. Open, each with the name of a different Black American[5] killed during their encounter with police. I chose both protests because they are—like Kaepernick's protests—examples of individual protest acts performed by Black professional athletes. In addition, these acts are performed in each athlete's respective athletic venue which—as I discuss in chapter 4—exist as White-dominant spaces[6].

The protest acts of Rose and Osaka are demonstrations of what I call "garment activism." The term "fashion activism" has been used to describe protests performed through the use of clothing; however, I find that term problematic when discussing activism because of both the denotations *and* the connotations of the word "fashion." To provide a sense of how the word is typically defined and used, I conducted a simple Google search for definitions of the word "fashion" and have provided a list of definitions and associated words and phrases below. The examples below represent the first 3 definitions found in the Google search.

Fashion Denotations and Connotations *(Note: I recognize that "fashion" has multiple definitions and can be used as both a noun and a verb depending on the context. I've intentionally chosen to only include the first definition from each source.)*		
Dictionary	First Definition	Additional Information
Oxford Languages Dictionary	a popular trend, especially in styles of dress and ornament or manners of behavior. Example: "his hair is cut in the latest fashion" Similar: vogue, trend, craze, rage, mania, mode, fad, fancy	
Merriam-Webster	the prevailing style (as in dress) during a particular time	FASHION, STYLE, MODE, VOGUE, FAD, RAGE, CRAZE mean the usage

[5]Because "United States" and "America" are typically seen as synonymous in the country and in the scholarship, they will be used interchangeably within the context of this work. However, I subscribe to the belief that there *are* multiple Americas (North America, South America, Central America).

[6] A definition of White-dominant space contextualizing it for *PSR* will be presented in chapter 3's *Where* section.

	Example: The spring *fashions* are now on display. Synonyms: fashion, style, mode, vogue, fad, rage, craze	accepted by those who want to be up-to-date. FASHION is the most general term and applies to any way of dressing, behaving, writing, or performing that is favored at any one time or place. the current *fashion* STYLE often implies a distinctive fashion adopted by people of taste. a media baron used to traveling in *style* MODE suggests the fashion of the moment among those anxious to appear elegant and sophisticated. slim bodies are the *mode* at this resort VOGUE stresses the wide acceptance of a fashion. short skirts are back in *vogue* FAD suggests caprice in taking up or in dropping a fashion. last year's *fad* is over RAGE and CRAZE stress intense enthusiasm in adopting a fad. Cajun food was the *rage* nearly everywhere for a time crossword puzzles once seemed just a passing *craze* but have lasted
Wikipedia	**Fashion** is an aesthetic expression, at a particular period and place and in a specific context, of clothing, footwear, lifestyle, accessories, makeup, hairstyle, and body proportions.[1] In its everyday use, the term implies a look defined by the fashion industry as that which is *the look of the moment*. What is called fashion is thus that which is made available and popular by fashion system (industry and media).	

Table 1: Fashion Denotations and Connotations

As the definitions reflect, the term "fashion" is inherently linked to and constrained by time (aka trends), with the primary emphasis being on the aesthetic. To precede the term "activism" with the term "fashion," then, creates the potential for these types of activist efforts to 1) be seen first and/or primarily as fashion statements or as part of a trend, and 2) relegated to a lesser degree of seriousness as a result. My response to this concern was to come up with an alternative way of rhetorically encapsulating protest acts in which cloth or fabric was used as a medium for displaying a written thought, idea, or concept. The term "garment" does not carry with it the social constraints of the word "fashion," plus it is broad enough to allow for various types of fabric usage (i.e. t-shirts, face masks).

Method of Analysis—Using *The PSR Puzzle* as a Data Collection Tool and Using a Critical Rhetorical Analysis Approach

In order to effectively analyze my data, I conflate two modes of analysis: the rhetorical analysis and critical analysis. My definition of rhetorical analysis begins with my understanding of rhetoric, which we tend to think of as the choices we make in our efforts to communicate and persuade. A rhetorical analysis, then, allows us to look at the individual parts of a text to determine how the speaker/writer/performer is using them collectively to make their argument. My description of critical analysis is two-fold: 1) it allows me to use the elements from the rhetorical analysis to discuss how the text functions, and 2) it allows me to bring in ideas not explicitly presented within the text itself to offer a broader contextualization of the work. In *The PSR Puzzle*, these additional ideas include the concepts of intentionality and effectiveness. *The PSR Puzzle* is an ideal data collection tool for gathering information regarding each protest act, so I use it in chapter 3 to guide my rhetorical analysis of how the elements of Rose's, Osaka's, and Kaepernick's activist performances work individually and collectively for a purpose (to persuade, inform, and/or entertain). In chapter 4, I focus specifically on *intentionality,* defining it (for *PSR*) and then taking a critical analysis approach to examining their actions. I use the following questions to guide my critical analysis: *What was done well and what was done poorly? In this context, was the protest successful or not? How do we know? What's the criteria for determining success*?

The rhetorical analysis is an essential tool because it will allow me to discuss the specific elements of each athlete's performance and their role in meaning-making; however critical analysis provides an additional layer to the analysis by allowing for analysis of the protestors' intentionality and effectiveness. Embracing a critical rhetorical analysis approach to analyze Black professional athletes' activists performances, then, aligns with Ridolfo and DeVoss'

conceptualization of rhetorical velocity in that the analysis 1) considers the Black professional athletes' activist performances—or their delivery—as a rhetorical mode (rhetorical analysis), and 2) considers Black professional athletes' tactics and how they are being used strategically to achieve short- or long-term goals (critical analysis) (Ridolfo & DeVoss, 2009).

The Broad Academic Exigency—Why the Fields of Rhetoric and Technical and Professional Communication Need Performative Symbolic Resistance

Performative Symbolic Resistance offers three specific benefits to those of us in the fields of rhetoric and *TPC*. One of the primary benefits of having such a framework at our disposal is that working with it forces us, as scholars, to wrestle with and think through our own perspectives about resistance, resistant acts, the bodies that perform them, and the types of resistant acts and bodies to which we attribute (or don't attribute) value. This element of cognitive reflexivity can only benefit us, and the knowledge we gain through the process should be reflected in our teaching and our scholarship.

In addition, when analyzing performance/performativity, symbolism, and resistant acts collectively, we are provided with an alternative way of examining/re-examining, describing, and discussing resistant acts, and this can ultimately lead to what Orlando L. Taylor refers to as "empowerment of voice" (Jackson & Richardson, 2003, ix). (Note: A more thorough discussion of this will be presented in the literature review in the next chapter.) And thirdly, *Performative Symbolic Resistance* addresses—in a small way—the concern expressed by Butler (2015) in *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* as she seeks language that speaks to the relationship between the human body, infrastructures, and the political struggle.

What I envision for *PSR* generally, then, is that it will 1) provide a *single phrase* that discursively connects performance/performativity, spaces and places, and resistant acts, helping us view them as a *singular idea*, and 2) will serve as an *interstice-tic framework and a rhetorical*

space that can be used to examine, analyze, discuss, and describe what occurs when people use their bodies *and* spaces and places to engage in resistant acts. In doing so, *Performative Symbolic Resistance* begins filling the rhetorical and analytical void addressed by Butler.

The Dissertation Outline

This introduction has familiarized rhetoric and *TPC* scholars with *Performative Symbolic Resistance* by doing the following:

1. Establishing the social and societal exigencies and my personal academic exigency creating the need for this conversation;
2. Explaining *PSR*'s origin story;
3. Presenting the research questions to be addressed by the dissertation;
4. Presenting the data collected and method of analysis; and
5. Briefly establishing the broader academic exigency creating the need for this conversation.

The remaining chapters will be developed based on the following outline and descriptions.

Chapter 2 will be this dissertation's literature review, the primary purpose being to provide a theoretical grounding for *PSR* by centering scholarship that speaks to the established social, societal, and cultural norms—norms that make engagement in *PSR* necessary. In addition, this literature review works to expand our conceptualization of rhetoric and *TPC* by centering multidisciplinary scholarship that both pushes against *and* moves us forward from the dominant understandings of what rhetoric and *TPC* are and can be. I begin by examining literature from scholars of philosophy and scholars of rhetoric exploring how bodies are theorized. Next, to explore how experiences shape knowledge, I draw from the work of two scholars: philosopher and physical chemist Michael Polanyi (1966), whose work explores tacit knowing and its

relationship with experiences, and the work of organization theorist Ikujiro Nonaka (1994), who explores the relationship between tacit (implicit) knowledge and explicit knowledge. In the next section, I discuss Mills' (1997) Racial Contract Theory, connecting it with Butler's (1993) concept of "zones of uninhabitability" and Chávez's (2018) discussions regarding the role of bodily difference. Collectively, these scholars help us understand the social and societal contexts that shape our understanding of how Blackness is theorized in the United States. In the next section of chapter 2, I examine Bachner's (2017) work on *inscription,* exploring how it exists as a concept and as practice. In the final section of this chapter, I examine how embodied performance and spaces and places are used as tools to engage in active resistance against *inscriptive practices*.

In Chapter 3, I use *The PSR Puzzle* to conduct an in-depth rhetorical analysis of the garment activism of Rose and Osaka and the kneeling activism of Kaepernick. Using *The PSR Puzzle* as a guide, this analysis will focus on the players' resistant acts in terms of 1) their performance and/or performativity, 2) their use of his body as a symbol of resistance, 3) their choice of a specific space and/or place and their ability to transform it and/or them into a site(s) of resistance, and 4) how these separate elements are used collectively to engage in the performance of a symbolic resistant act. In Chapter 4, I offer a critical analysis of each athlete's protest, focusing specifically on intentionality and the roles of rhetorical velocity and telos.

In Chapter 5, I will conclude this conversation by reiterating *PSR's* purpose and its place in the fields of *Rhetoric* and *TPC*, offering it as a way for scholars of rhetoric and *TPC* to describe and discuss acts of resistance in contexts outside of the context of Black athletic performance. Here, I will segue into how *PSR* can be used to explore resistant acts more broadly—acts performed individually and collectively by those in other marginalized

communities. I will offer it as partial solution to Butler's quest to find a "set of related language" that speaks to an existing gap in our fields' languages, a gap that only allows us to think about, write about, and discuss resistant acts as part and parcel. *PSR* does allow for this partial way of viewing protest and protest efforts, but it also does the work of consolidating them into a single concept and allowing us to see resistant acts as more than the *sum* of their parts. I will also use this space to discuss how *PSR* can be used as a reflexive pedagogical tool, and I will demonstrate *PSR*'s malleability by discussing how it can be deployed by individuals and organizations outside of the fields of *Rhetoric and TPC.*

Chapter 2: Empowerment of Voice

Literature Review Introduction

In the previous chapter, I introduced scholars to *Performative Symbolic Resistance (PSR)*, a new methodology that can be used to analyze resistant acts in which bodies and spaces and places are used simultaneously and collectively. I described the multiple exigencies that lead to the development of *PSR*:

1. my personal academic exigency of not having language at my disposal that would allow me to adequately and accurately analyze Kaepernick's use of kneeling as a resistant act;
2. the broader social exigency that was the impetus for Kaepernick's resistant act—the continuous killing of Black men, specifically, and of Black people, generally, by police with impunity;
3. the broader academic exigency—that there is a persistent need for language that will aid in the decolonialization of academic language.

In addition, I briefly describe some of the tactics Black professional athletes use to engage in resistant acts, which I've now classified as examples of *PSR*:

1. **From 2014:** NBA player Derrick Rose wearing a t-shirt with the phrase "I Can't Breathe" in protest of Eric Garner's death resulting from a police chokehold;
2. **From 2016:** (former) NFL player Colin Kaepernick's kneeling on the sidelines of the football field during the national anthem;
3. **From 2020:** Professional tennis player Naomi Osaka wearing seven different black face masks at the U.S. Open, each with the name of a different Black American killed during their encounter with police.

As scholars, we often see our work as academic in nature—written by academics specifically for academic audiences (i.e. other scholars and field professionals). However, we recognize that the work we do is often informed by events that occur outside of an academic context,[7] and Black professional athlete activism provides us with ideal opportunities to examine social protest through an academic lens. In the aforementioned performances of resistance, each athlete actively engaged in embodied resistance in order to critique, resist, and combat constraining hegemonic power structures and the social norms embedded within them, norms that make it not only "traditional [in America] to destroy the black body," but that also make it "heritage" (Coates). In order to unpack and understand what Coates is actually saying here, it's important to know how these words are defined. *Oxford Language Dictionaries* defines them as follows:

> *tradition*: the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation, or the fact of being passed on in this way.
>
> *heritage*: property that is or may be inherited; an inheritance.

What Coates has essentially done with these statements is placed racial violence against the Black body—and therefore, the Black person—within this country's historical context. In these passages, Coates conveyed to his son that our Black bodies and the tradition of violence against them are a part of historically established social expectations in the United States. These social expectations, which are also described in Mills' social and Racial Contract, situate this violence as both a social norm and a perpetual entitlement, an entitlement bequeathed to the perpetrators by their predecessors and forefathers.[8]

[7] As scholars, our work is/can/should be reflective of the world and not just responsive to other writing/theory.
[8] In the following section, I describe *meta-conceptualization* as a group's collective understanding. I also discuss my contention that every group of people has tacit knowledge derived through experiences (individual and/or

In this dissertation, I specifically use *PSR* to analyze some of the specific ways Black professional athletes use embodied performance to engage in resistant acts in White-dominant spaces and places, acts performed in direct response to specific instances in which the Black body was destroyed. The public visibility of professional athletics provides these athletes with public platforms—platforms that can then be used as opportunities to empower the voices of those who do not have the platforms to do so themselves. In the forward of Jackson and Richardson's (2003) edited collection titled *Understanding African American Rhetoric*, Orlando L. Taylor situated empowerment of voice within an academic context: "With it, scholars from historically marginalized groups acquire access to vehicles needed to disseminate…perspectives and paradigms across mass academic venues…" (p. ix). Even though Taylor wrote specifically about empowerment of voice for scholars here, he also emphasized two things. First, he stipulated that *access*—or the lack, thereof—is a social and societal issue combatted by civil rights activists. And second, he emphasized the fact that the empowerment gained by scholars from historically marginalized groups does not exist in a vacuum. It extends from scholars to those who are exposed to their scholarship and beyond, leading to opportunities for listeners/readers to become more empowered as a result (p. xi). Both my reaction to the exigencies I describe at the beginning of this chapter and the activist efforts of Black professional athletes demonstrate a shared quest—for our voices to be empowered. But this personal empowerment of our voices is not simply for our own individual sakes—it is an effort to use our respective platforms to advocate for those whose voices continue to be muted in this

collective), which becomes part of a collective experience for the members of the group who then embrace and experience a type of shared consciousness. In my current project, my primary focus is on the meta-conceptualization/shared consciousness of Black people in the United States; however, I contend that the generational concepts of "tradition" and "heritage" described by Coates—concepts that situate the Black body as something to be destroyed—also represent a meta-conceptualization/shared consciousness, one of racialized patriarchy and hegemony.

country, to advocate for those in our society who continue to be oppressed in imaginable and unimaginable ways. This is the impetus for my research, and my work attempts to connect these tactical nonverbal acts to the fields of rhetoric and *TPC* by providing evidence as to how performance, performativity, spaces, and places are used rhetorically for the previously stated purposes. My work draws from and extends Taylor's discussion about empowerment of voice further by situating it as the core rationale for both the creation of the term *PSR* and for my decision to use it to analyze the specific resistant acts of Black professional athletes.

Additionally, my research and projects to date have made me acutely aware of the fact that the unique experiences of and the resulting *tacit knowledge* gained by Black people in America—both historically and contemporarily—have created a need for the use of *tactics*—such as performance and/or performativity—to engage in embodied resistance against socially-constructed oppression(s). As I use *PSR* to analyze the resistant acts of Black professional athletes in the subsequent chapters, I do so from the mindset that tacit knowledge shapes understanding. More specifically, I contend that tacit knowledge shapes understandings Black people acquire regarding their "place" in our societal hierarchy—understandings that are the result of historical and on-going social, societal, and cultural exchanges. These exchanges—which I refer to as *inscription* and *inscriptive practices*—are discussed in detail in subsequent sections of this chapter, and the following chapters will explore how *PSR* is used as a tool in the tactical resistance of these practices.

Understanding Embodied Performance and Spaces and Places as Tactical Tools of Resistance

Scholars across fields and disciplines recognize that bodies have been and continue to be perpetually theorized, and they recognize that these theorizations are not simply conceptualizations bound by our psyches—they are also manifested in our physical world. As

such, scholars often engage in scholarship in which they analyze the ways bodies are theorized and how this theorization impacts bodies in the physical world. Mills' Racial Contract Theory and Butler's discussions about bodies that matter specifically address the ways bodies are racialized and gendered, and their work analyzes the impact this type of conceptual categorization has on corporeal bodies. Their ideas work in concert with the scholarship of rhetoric scholars in offering theorizations of the human body, including DeLuca's (1999) work situating the body as an "unruly argument," Chávez's (2018) argument that the body is both an "actual and abstract rhetorical concept," and Hawhee's (2009) analysis of Burke's work establishing that some bodies exist "out of sync with 'normal' societal rhythms" (p. 14). (Note: Burke specifically focuses on bodies that are "sick or ailing" (p. 14); however, I contend that Black bodies also exist in this same type of metaphorical space due to racialization.) The collective work of Mills, Butler, DeLuca, Chávez, Hawhee, and Burke provides us with an intimate understanding of how the body is theorized and, therefore, perceived; however, as it pertains specifically to *PSR*, their work helps us develop understandings and awarenesses of how the *Black* body is theorized and, thus, perceived socially and societally. I have separated these understandings and awarenesses into five concrete parts:

1. An understanding of how Blackness is being theorized in the United States, a theorization that is reflected in the (mis)treatment of Black people;
2. An understanding of the role *inscription* plays in meaning-making, specifically as it pertains to Blackness and the Black body;
3. An awareness of how the negative theorization of Blackness and the Black body manifests through *inscriptive practices*;
4. An awareness of the performative nature of the physical body;

5. An awareness of the symbolic nature of spaces and places.

Understanding the connection between 1) how the Black body is theorized and perceived and 2) how this theorization and perception impacts the Black corporeal body in the physical world is essential to understanding what *PSR* is, why Black professional athletes engage in acts of *PSR,* and how *The PSR Puzzle* can be used by scholars to analyze the resistant acts of Black professional athletes.

When Black professional athletes engage in *PSR*, they tap into what Polanyi (1966) referred to as a *tacit knowing*. His analysis of tacit knowing drew from the following experiment performed by psychologists Lazarus and McCleary in 1949 where they refer to the notion of *subception*[9]:

> These authors presented a person with a large number of nonsense syllables, and after showing certain of the syllables, they administered an electric shock. Presently the person showed symptoms of anticipating the shock at the sight of "shock syllables"; yet, on questioning, he could not identify them. He had come to know when to expect a shock, but he could not tell what made him expect it. He had acquired a knowledge similar to that which we have when we know a person by signs which we cannot tell. (pp. 7-8)

This type of knowing acquired by the experiment's participants was the direct result of the experience itself, an experience in which they came to unconsciously associate "shock syllables" with the physical shock itself. I contend that every group of people—marginalized or not—has tacit knowledge derived through experiences. However, I also contend that while these experiences may occur to *the* individual or *an* individual, they become part of a collective

[9]Polanyi refers to subception as "the faculty by which we apprehend the relation between two events, both which we know, but only one of which we can tell" (p.7). This reflects his overall contention regarding human knowledge, which is "the fact that we can know more than we can tell" (p.4).

experience for the members of the group who then embrace and experience a type of shared consciousness. The resulting experiential knowledge shapes each group's cultural collective understanding—aka each group's *meta*[10]-conceptualization.

Even though Polanyi connected tacit—or implicit—knowledge with experiences, it is important to note that he situated this type of knowledge philosophically, stipulating that it could not be made explicit. This is a perspective about tacit knowledge with which I disagree. To support my contention that tacit/implicit knowledge *can* become explicit, I draw from Ikujiro Nonaka's (1994) model of organizational knowledge creation. In his article "A Dynamic Theory of Organizational Knowledge Creation," Nonaka (1994) examined Polanyi's ideas regarding tacit knowledge from a more practical perspective, postulating that "organizational knowledge is created through a continuous dialogue between tacit and explicit knowledge" (p. 14). The image below illustrates the process through which tacit knowledge is converted to and continues to engage with explicit knowledge.

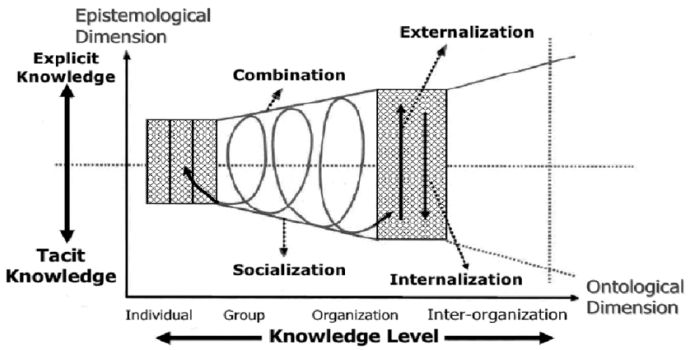

Figure 3: Nonaka's (1994) model of organizational knowledge creation

Nonaka analyzes tacit and explicit knowledge from an organizational science standpoint.

[10] Even though the prefix "meta" is most often associated with and attributed to the Greek, it has varied contemporary usage (both formal and informal). Within the current context, I use the informal definition of "meta" found in Merriam-Webster: **https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meta** informal: showing or suggesting an explicit awareness of itself or oneself as a member of its category: cleverly self-referential

However, because organizations all have group cultures, his ideas also apply to groups outside of organizations. For individuals engaging in *PSR*, tacit knowledge is acquired either through individual or collective experience, both of which are informed by the individual's connection to a specific cultural group. By analyzing the protest acts of Black professional athletes through the lens of *PSR*, scholars are able to see how these acts exist as manifestations of this meta-conceptualization and as examples of tacit/implicit knowledge being made explicit.

In a subsequent section, I discuss *how* Black professional athletes use their bodies and spaces and places tactically to engage in resistant acts. However, we must first have a clear understanding of *why* they make these specific tactical choices. More specifically, we need to understand 1) the social and societal contexts that—individually and collectively—shape how Blackness is theorized, 2) the role *inscription* plays in shaping how Blackness is conceptualized and theorized, 3) the role *inscriptive practices* play in maintaining the societal hierarchy, and 4) how having an awareness of inscriptive practices informs Black professional athletes' choices of *how* and *where* to engage in resistant acts.

Understanding Society's Structure: Mills' Racial Contract Theory

The social and societal contexts that shape our knowledges and understandings of Blackness—or how Blackness is theorized—are bound up in and perpetually demonstrated by what Mills (1997) refers to as a Racial Contract. Mills' work on *Racial Contract theory* emphasizes the notion that racism, i.e. global white supremacy, is a political system that uses both formal and informal methods of maintaining power and socioeconomic privilege (p. 3). The author used this theoretical framework to espouse that the social contract upon which the United States is built—with societal expectations evidenced by the country's social, cultural, and political norms and expectations for those who reside here—is, indeed, based upon and bound to

a Racial Contract because it is, at its core, based on a "color-coded morality" (p. 16).

It is vital to have a clear understanding of the role that race plays as a determining factor in *what* bodies matter in our society and in *how* they matter in our society. It is just as important to understand the structures that went into establishing these "matterings" and that also continue to perpetuate them as societal norms. Mills' description of the Racial Contract explains how race, bodies, and our society's systems are intertwined:

> It [the Racial Contract] is a set of formal or informal agreements or meta-agreements… between the *members* [emphasis added] of one subset of humans…henceforth designated by shifting 'racial'…with the class of full persons, to categorize the remaining subset of humans as 'nonwhite' and of a different and inferior moral status, subpersons, so that they have a subordinate civil standing in the white or white-ruled polities the whites either already inhabit or establish or in transactions as aliens with these polities, and the moral and juridical rules normally regulating the behavior of whites in their dealings with one another either do not apply at all in dealings with nonwhites or apply only in a qualified form…(p. 11)

What Mills is referring to here are two different elements that are necessary parts of the Racial Contract: 1) categorization and 2) formal and informal agreements. And both parts of the Racial Contract hinge on two very specific ideas: the notions of *membership* and *relationality*. Membership is one of the most important parts of this description because it serves as a demarcation that establishes what bodies matter, how they matter, who gets to determine both, and how this determination is maintained. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler (1993) posed the question *What bodies come to matter—and why?* (xii). In other words, what corporeal bodies are included in the primary membership discussed by Mills? What bodies have the authority to

establish positions of relationality for everyone *outside* of that primary membership group to the people *within* that primary membership group? What bodies have the authority to create and enforce the "set of formal and informal agreements or meta-agreements" upon which societies are built? (Mills, 1997, p. 11). In the article "The Body: An Abstract and Actual Rhetorical Concept," Chávez (2018) addressed the notions of membership and relationality in her analysis of abstract and actual bodies and the field of rhetorical studies. She stated, "It is only through *bodily difference* [my emphasis] in contrast to the unspoken, yet specified, white, cis-gender, able-bodied, heterosexual male standard that particular bodies come to matter" (p. 242). What Mills, Butler, and Chávez collectively described is a historically concerted effort by members of the heteropatriarchy to use color or race as a justification for constituting a social "fixity of the body" (Butler, 1993, p. 2). In her discussion about what she calls "heterosexual hegemony" (xii), Butler (1993) focused primarily on "sex" and its connection to the materiality of the body. However, the ideas she presented are just as relevant to the racialized body because in both cases (sex and race), there is a "rethinking of the process by which a bodily norm is assumed," a rethinking that places specific gendered and racialized bodies in what Butler referred to as "the zone of uninhabitability":

> This zone of uninhabitability will constitute the defining limit of a subject's domain; it will constitute that site of dreaded identification against which—and by virtue of which—the domain of the subject will circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and to life. In this sense, then, the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, 'inside' the subject at its own founding repudiation. (p. 3)

This notion of a "zone of uninhabitability" plays a vital role in the discussion of

membership and relationality. It establishes the discursive existence of and represents the conceptualization of an intentionally established hierarchy ideology that both centers and elevates specific bodies (white bodies, in general) while situating all other bodies in relationship to the white male body. The concepts of membership and relationality are made visible in the image below.

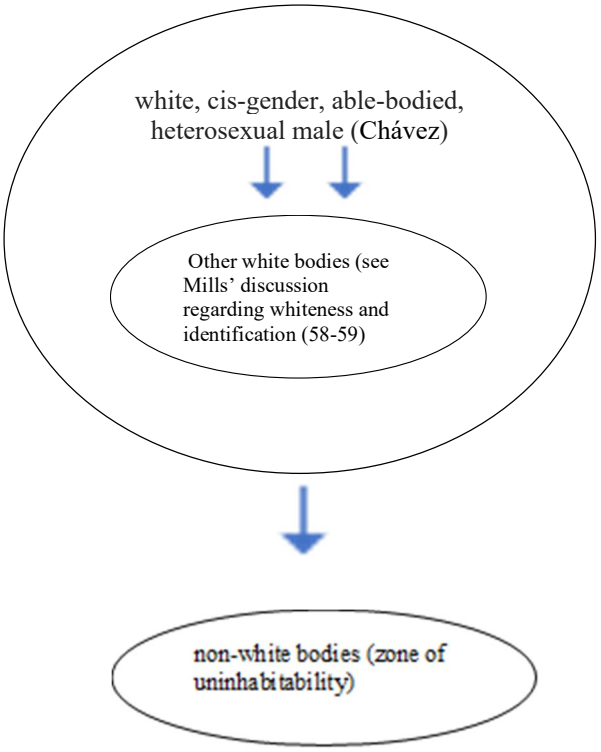

Figure 4. Image illustrating Butler's zone of uninhabitability

As the image illustrates, bodies are both included and excluded, based on their relationship to the ideal body of the white, cis-gender, able-bodied, heterosexual male. White bodies that exist outside of the "ideal" white male body are still included in the primary membership group based solely on their whiteness (even though it is important to note that these bodies certainly have and continue to encounter bias and be victims of oppressive conditions and acts); however, it is the "color" or "racial" bodily difference that Mills' Racial Contract centers as the rationale for the establishment of color-coded social norms and juridical doctrine. When color or race is used as a tool for zone placement as discussed by Butler, the body can then be placed within a race-based

hierarchy. The following section explores the role *inscription* plays in establishing and maintaining a color-coded social system, focusing on 1) how it works on a conceptual level and 2) how it works as a practice.

The Role of Inscription

Inscription Shapes Conceptualization

In her book *The Mark of Theory: Inscriptive Figures, Poststructuralist Prehistories,* Bachner (2017) defined inscription as "a scene that takes place where and when a material surface is breached and forced to wear marks" (p. 2). Bachner's definition focuses on two distinct ideas—that of *where* the inscription or "breach" takes place and that of *when*. Within the context of *PSR*, I contend that the *where* and the *when* have always, already been established (and re-established) as a consistent and persistent thread throughout our country's history—the *where* being the Black body[11], and the *when* being the country's inception. What follows is an examination of how inscription works to shape how Blackness is conceptualized and theorized.

In her discussion about the ways that surfaces become "altered" and "marked" by inscription, Bachner stated that inscription "becomes the kernel of theoretical framework that forges new links between signification and materiality" (p. 6). But how does inscription do this work? More specifically, how does it work to shape how Blackness is perceived/understood/theorized?

According to Bachner, inscription does this work by acting as an interface—a "cutting point"—that "severs and reconnects materiality and signification" (p. 14). The concepts of inscription and interface are rhetorical and figurative and not necessarily negative in and of

[11] Clarifying note: In *The PSR Puzzle,* ***where*** is the White-dominant space/location in which a resistant act takes place—the physical space/place. In my discussion of inscription and inscriptive practices, ***where*** is the Black body because it is the site that has been "marked/breached"—first, figuratively through inscription and then literally through inscriptive practices.

themselves; however, mental machinations allow for the concept of *difference* to serve as the "operational basis" for processing the reconnection of the material and the signification (p. 14). During the reconnection process, the (Black) body is then re-inscribed with new meaning, and dichotomization is introduced. Instead of materiality and signification working in conjunction with each other as they did in their original context, inscription allows them to be posited against each other—resulting in "materiality versus signification" or "body versus meaning" (p. 14). This understanding of inscription as a conceptualization tool is vital because it allows us to consider how the figurative notions of "seeing" and "understanding" manifest themselves in our physical world. Bachner stated the following:

> Starting as a simple physical act charged with conceptual baggage, inscription thus becomes an instrument of difference management, of establishing, aligning, renegotiating, even complicating binary differences. As a conceptual figure, though derived from a material imaginary, inscription rules some of the ways we perceive reality, in which the multiplicity of the real becomes intelligible and structured. (p. 14)

Even though inscription as a concept is constructed within the "material imaginary," this conceptualization has the power to shape what is perceived as real in the physical world. This is specifically relevant whereas the Black body is concerned. Drawing from and building on Fanon's (2008) work regarding skin tones as an "epidermal racial schema" and Gilroy's (2000) discussion regarding "the brutal simplicity of racial typology," Bachner specifically addressed the way inscription and inscriptive practices[12] are used to delineate difference (and/or delineating difference is used as a justification for engaging in inscriptive practices). She stated the following:

[12] See the next section for my discussion of Inscription as a Practice.

> Metaphors of marking frequently draw on physical characteristics and turn them into stigmata of sexual and racial difference, as deviance from the norms of masculinity, whiteness, heterosexuality, or physical and mental ability. Such constructions take visible physical marks as indices of categorical differences, as god- or nature-given markers. (p. 15)

This idea of "visible physical markers as categorical differences, as god- or nature-given markers" is embedded in the fibers of this country's historical being, and it is an idea that Kendi (2016) explored in his authoritative text *Stamped From the Beginning*. In this work, Kendi offered a historical account of racist ideas in the United States—their origins, their original and continued justifications, and their cyclical nature. From the religious underpinnings (established by Cotton Mather and the Puritans) and the juridical and constitutional underpinnings (established by the country's founding fathers), Kendi explored how the foundational doctrines of this country have worked in tandem to establish, enforce, and reinforce a social hierarchy based on color or race. What has been created, then, is a metaphorical inscription upon the (Black) body that permeates the veil between the mental and physical worlds. It is this inscription that is then used as the foundation and justification for social, societal, and legislative oppression against the Black body.

Understanding how inscription works to shape conceptualization allows us to examine Black professional athletes' acts of *PSR* through the lens of *The PSR Puzzle.* More specifically, it aids in our analysis of *who* each athlete is. Because they have been inscribed with Blackness, *who* each athlete is—or at least part of their identity—is always, already determined because their bodies have and continue to be racially constructed.[13]

[13] Examples demonstrating the role inscription plays in shaping identity will be presented in chapter 3's rhetorical analysis.

Inscription as Practice

In the previous section, I presented Butler's ideas regarding a zone of uninhabitability and its impact on gendered bodies. I also discussed how placement within the zone impacts and is impacted by the assumptions made regarding the (Black) body (i.e. how the [Black] body has been theorized). In the current section, I want to continue drawing from Butler's discussion regarding the body. I continue to adopt a variant of her ideas by focusing specifically on racialized bodies (instead of gendered bodies). More specifically, I plan to connect Butler's ideas regarding discursive practices with my current discussion of *inscriptive practices*, situating inscriptive practices as those strategic[14] efforts—both discursive and physical practices—that have historically been used to establish, enforce, and re-enforce zone placement. I have chosen to do this because many of the ideas Butler presents are just as relevant to racialized bodies, and they work discursively if we just substitute the word "racialized" for "gendered." Because this section focuses on *inscription as practice* and how these practices are established as regulatory norms, I offer this passage from Butler's *Bodies That Matter* in which I ask the reader to re-imagine Butler's words with me, substituting the words "racialized" and "race" for "sexual" and "sex":

> Sexual difference[s]…are…marked and formed by discursive practices. Further, to claim that sexual differences are indissociable from discursive demarcations is not the same as claiming that discourse causes sexual difference. The category of "sex" is, from the start, normative; it is what Foucault has called a "regulatory ideal." In this sense, then, sex not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the

[14] See my earlier discussion of de Certeau's (1994) distinction between strategies and tactics.

> power to produce—demarcate, circulate, differentiate—the bodies it controls. Thus, "sex" is a regulatory ideal whose materialization is compelled, and this materialization takes place (or fails to take place) through certain highly regulated practices. In other words, "sex" is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time. It is not a simple fact or static condition of a body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialized "sex" and achieve this materialization through forcible reiteration of those norms. (p. 1-2)

In my re-imagining of this passage, I have shifted the focus from gender to race to establish my contention that the same practices historically used to gender bodies socially and societally—discursive, regulatory practices—have also been used to racialize bodies socially and societally.[15] Additionally, I am situating these discursive, regulatory practices as types of *inscriptive practices*, drawing from Bachner's use of the phrase. It is important to note that Bachner and other scholars primarily situate these types of practices as those mediated on physical bodies in the physical world (such as tattoos or the literal practice of writing on a page). I, too, recognize inscriptive practices in such a way. However, within the context of *PSR*, I also see inscriptive practices as multiply layered. On the one hand, they *do* manifest themselves in the physical world as a type of writing, specifically in the writing practices that have historically established the juridical context for race-based (mis)treatment of bodies—hence, the connection to Butler's (and Foucault's) notions of discursive practices and regulatory ideals and practices. In her book *From Black Codes to Recodification: Removing the Veil from Regulatory Writing*,

[15] Even though I'm acutely aware that similar discursive and regulatory practices have been used to gender and racialize bodies, I would also like to acknowledge the fact that Black women have often had to decide which battle to fight at a given time—misogyny or racism. As such, I'm grateful for the on-going Black Feminist Movement and theoretical frameworks like Black Feminist Theory which speak to and allow for analysis of the double-marginalization of Black women. For a condensed introduction to this issue, see "Section 3: Black Feminism" of *Amistad: Digital Resources*.

Williams (2017) explored how specific regulations established throughout this country's history—regulations born out of legislation and then enforced judicially, socially, and societally—have had the dual effect of 1) perpetually oppressing African Americans and 2) creating a perpetual sentiment of governmental distrust for African Americans. Likewise, Mills discussed the ways that Indian laws and slave codes were used to "formally codify the subordinate status of non-whites and…regulated their treatment" (p. 26). But these types of codifications and juridical regulations are not bound by time. There is a current effort by Republican-led legislatures in 43 states to change election laws in ways that could make it harder to vote. On February 28th, 2021, Steve Inskeep of *NPR*'s "Morning Edition" presented information from The Brennan Center (a nonprofit that tracks voting laws) indicating that 43 states are considering 253 bills that would raise barriers to voting. These efforts are an attempt to use juridical doctrine to inhibit members of marginalized populations from being able to participate in the election process, and they are a perpetuation of the types of regulatory codifications referenced by both Williams and Mills.

But it is not only the written inscriptive practices that have impacted Black people's perceptions of government and its agents. Additionally, I see the second layer of inscriptive practices as those practices that manifest themselves in the form of behaviors, which are also the practices that have resulted in Black professional athletes' engagement in acts of *PSR*. They are the practices conducted *against* Black people and the Black body—practices conducted as a result of how the Black body—or *Blackness*, on the whole—has been/is being theorized (i.e. being seen as a non-person or a threat due to inscriptive contextualizations). They are the practices against the Black corporeal body that often result in Black people being killed during

interactions with police—being shot in the back, shot in their beds, shot while pulled over for a broken tail-light, suffocated, etc.

Bachner's ideas about the relationship between inscription, signs, and how we conceptualize bodies and Mills', Butler's, and Williams' discussions regarding the role of discursive, regulatory practices align with my contention that there exists not only a meta-conceptualization of an intentionally established hierarchy based on skin color, but also that the notions of inscription and conceptual thought are interwoven and cyclical, drawing from and building on each other perpetually. This body theorization is the foundation of what Mills referred to as "the Racial Contract," and it shapes our understanding of the existing social and societal contexts—contexts that require and rely upon 1) an emphasis on bodily difference and 2) a "seeing" or "reading" of bodies in a very specific hierarchical way. The notion of inscription and Kendi's ideas about being "stamped from the beginning"—whether it be color as a stamp/inscription or the discursive stamping/inscribing of governing ideas written into law—play a crucial role in understanding Mills' Racial Contract theory. Inscription and inscriptive practices connect Mills' discussion about body subsets, Butler's discussion about body materiality, Chávez's discussion about bodily difference, and my own ideas about the connection between meta-conceptualization and *PSR*. The following section furthers our understanding of *PSR* by exploring how bodies and spaces and places are used in tactical acts of resistance.

The Connection to Performance Theory: Using Embodied Performance and Spaces and Places to Represent Crises, Schism, and Conflict

Part of my contention is that when people engage in *PSR*, they are engaging in a type of performance. It is important to note that my use of the term *performance* within the context of this dissertation is shaped primarily by Victor Turner's (1982) and Richard Schechner's (1985,1988) work on *performance theory*. Both authors examined the ways in which bodies are

used as tools of performance in cultures around the world, and they focused on the importance of performance in shaping our comprehension of our world. Schechner (1988) also emphasized the idea that performance (in the theatrical sense) allows the actor to use "bodily actions" to "express crisis, schism, and conflict" (xi). Even though Schechner described actors in the theatrical sense, this description of performance aligns with my own use of the term within the context of my work. When Black professional athletes engage in acts of *PSR*, they are actively using their bodies to demonstrate two specific understandings: 1) their awareness and opposition to the ongoing literal "crisis, schism, and conflict" being experienced by Black people in their encounters with police in this country, and 2) that they recognize the power that can be wielded from their unique vantage points as Black professional athletes.

It is important to note that even though performance is often perceived as dramaturgical and performativity is often perceived as phenomenological, they are both relevant to and necessary for the contextualization of my work. They both pertain to the way bodies are used to perform acts, specifically in public spaces and places, to counter oppressive rhetoric(s). To further contextualize this specific type of rhetorical act and action, I turn to Judith Butler's foundational work on performativity. In her 1988 essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," Butler discussed the phenomenological theory of 'acts,' which "seeks to explain the mundane way in which social agents constitute social reality through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign" (521). It is here that Butler emphasized the fact that we use our bodies to engage in gendered performances, contending that "the acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts" (521). Her additional works (1993, 2015) examined the communicative nature of our body and its usage in combatting social ills. She

explored how our physical bodies "acting in concert can be an embodied form of calling into question the inchoate and powerful dimensions of reigning notions of the political" (Butler, 2015, p. 9). When Black professional athletes use their bodies and their specific sporting venues to engage in *PSR*, they are using their bodies to symbolically represent the type of schism, crises, and conflict that continues to be perpetuated in our society—specifically, that of Black people being killed during their interactions with police and the ensuing impunity.

Conclusion

The previous sections of this review of the literature help us understand why Black professional athletes use embodied performance and spaces and places as tools when engaging in resistant acts, which is derived from their tacit knowledge regarding the existence of a societal hierarchy that continues to allow for the mistreatment of Black people in this country. This discussion included an explanation of the social contract—presented by Mills as a Racial Contract—that has historically situated non-white people as a subset. This situation precludes people other than white people from personhood based on the notion of bodily difference, which excludes them from the possibility of becoming part of the systems upon which the social/Racial Contract is built—which is every system within a society (social, political, economic, governmental, etc.). It also explained how this understanding of the existing social/racial context calls for a "seeing" or "reading" of bodies in a very specific hierarchical way.

In summary, inscription—both as a concept and as a practice—illustrates the Racial Contract, helping to maintain the social, political, and economic status quos which were originally established by governmental agencies and have been systemically maintained in this country. The previous sections of this review of the literature help us understand how bodies are theorized, the connection between tacit and explicit knowledge and its connection to *PSR*, the

role inscription and inscriptive practices play in maintaining the social hierarchy, and how the Racial Contract works in conjunction with the existing social contract by imposing limits as to who can be included as a legitimate part of society. Each of these present a very real bodily and material concern for people who are not seen as a legitimate part of society, people who belong to the non-white subset. Because race becomes equivalent to personhood, this classification of non-whiteness automatically prevents those in this subset from ever attaining personhood, thereby preventing them from ever being entitled to the rights and privileges assigned to people. I contend that the color-coding discussed by Mills serves as an inscriptive act upon the body, allowing color or Blackness to be used as a justification for placing the Black body in a subservient metaphorical—and social—space described by Butler as the "zone on uninhabitability." The result is that bodies' phenotypical characteristics—either Blackness or whiteness—can then be used as the foundation for ascribing specific bodies with specific statuses. For Black people, the result of this inscribing—and the subsequent ascription of "sub" positionality in the zone of uninhabitability—has resulted in their continuous sanctioned (mis)treatment by those in positions of power, as in the cases of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Michael Brown.

In the following chapters, I offer the results of an analysis of two types of protests performed by Black professional athletes between 2014 and 2020: the 2016 kneeling protest acts of former NFL player Colin Kaepernick, and the garment activism performed by NBA player Derrick Rose in 2014 and by professional tennis player Naomi Osaka in 2020. Each resistant act was performed in response to the killing of a Black person or Black people by police officers. I chose these specific resistant acts because of their similarities as well as their differences. In order to use *The PSR Puzzle* to analyze resistant acts such as these, a Critical Rhetorical Analysis

approach is essential because it enables us to explore these resistant acts' connections to each other, where they diverge from each other, and the significant role intentionality plays in each case.

Chapter 3: Using *Performative Symbolic Resistance* for Rhetorical Analysis

Introduction

In Chapter 1, I defined *PSR* as the use of a specific nonverbal motion(s), act(s), or series of actions as a tactic to symbolize protest against a socially constructed system of oppression. I situated it as a term that can be used to name, describe, or analyze resistant acts. I further described *PSR* as being based on the idea that an individual can use their physical body to perform resistance while simultaneously using specific spaces and acts to 1) symbolize an idea or ideology and to 2) create or perpetuate a resistant rhetoric. I presented *The Performative Symbolic Resistance Puzzle* as a tool for analyzing protests in order to determine whether or not a resistant act can be labeled as *Performative Symbolic Resistance,* and I used the phrase *resistant rhetoric* to describe acts of resistance—further defined in this chapter—and the bodies that engage in them. If you recall from chapter 1, resistance can be labeled as *PSR* if it meets the criteria established on *The PSR Puzzle*. In this chapter I define resistant rhetoric by drawing from multiple scholars' definitions of and perspectives about what rhetoric is and what it does.

Next, I will put *The PSR Puzzle* into action by using it as a data collection tool. Focusing on the five elements of the puzzle (who, what/how, when/where), I will conduct an in-depth rhetorical analysis of the protest acts of Derrick Rose, Naomi Osaka, and Colin Kaepernick, situating their acts of *PSR* as examples of resistant rhetorics. I'm using three terms throughout this paragraph: *PSR*, resistant act, and resistant rhetoric. *PSR* is always a resistant act or action performed by the actor (visualize Kaepernick's kneeling). It also meets the criteria for a resistant rhetoric described in the following paragraph because it is intended to do the work of confronting and disrupting the hegemonic status quo. Therefore, *PSR* is always a resistant act, and it is always a resistant rhetoric. However, not all resistant acts can be considered *PSR* (visualize the

United States Capital riot in January of 2021).

In Chapter 4, I will use the information from this rhetorical analysis as the foundation for an in-depth critical analysis of these athletes' actions and their relationship to *intentionality*, which is the final piece of *The PSR Puzzle*.

Defining Resistant Rhetoric

A resistant rhetoric does the work of pushing back against traditionally prescribed/ascribed hegemonic notions of how the world is or should be in the quest for power and empowerment, both personal and collective. All of the following scholars understand rhetoric as inherently social, cultural, and communal, with each element working to shape what we perceive as important and informing and influencing how we choose to convey those perceptions to others. In *Understanding African American Rhetoric*, Jackson and Richardson (2003) presented a series of chapters that explore African American rhetoric—what it is and what it does. In chapter 1, specifically, Karenga discussed *kaweida*, a term created by the author in the wake of the 1960s civil rights movements that employs African concepts as tools for describing and analyzing rhetoric. The author used words like *nommo* as a way to demonstrate the use of rhetoric in African countries and its (rhetoric's) specific connection to community. In his essay titled "Tricksters, Fools, and Sophists: Technical Communication as Postmodern Rhetoric," Savage (2004) argued that "technical communicators should consider themselves as rhetoricians in the sophistic sense, that is, as politically and socially-engaged communicators who recognize the inevitability of their texts as socially transformative" (p. 171). In her article "Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: A Case Study of Decolonial Technical Communication Theory, Methodology, and Pedagogy," Haas (2012) defined rhetoric as "the negotiation of cultural information to affect social action (persuade)" (p. 287). And in their edited anthology

The Routledge Reader of African American Rhetoric, Young and Robinson (2018) described the six elements of African American rhetoric: language, style, discourse, perspective, community, and suasion (p. 3-6), each of which also speaks to and draws from the social, cultural, and communal. As part of their analysis of the work of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Nellie McKay (2004, xxxviii) and the "trope of the talking book," Young and Robinson describe the communal connection derived as a result of shared experiences[16]—a connected perspective that often informs which discursive tools Black people in America employ in their efforts to do rhetoric (i.e. in their efforts to communicate and persuade). This directly aligns with Stevens and Malesh's (2009) description of rhetoric aimed specifically at social change as "who is doing what, why they are doing it, and how they are doing it," (p. 7). They stated that "A rhetorical approach to the study of social movements, then, asks and attempts to answer these questions as they pertain to the persuasive tactics of agents for change (p. 7). A rhetorical approach to the study of social movements, then, asks and attempts to answer these questions as they pertain to the persuasive tactics of agents for change, and it was this specific description of rhetoric from Stevens and Malesh that helped guide my development of the criteria for *The PSR Puzzle*.

Putting *The PSR Puzzle* into Action

In order to put *The PSR Puzzle* into action and examine the ways Rose, Kaepernick, and Osaka become engaged *as* and *in* resistant rhetorics, I've used *The PSR Puzzle* as a data collection tool and presented it below in Table 2. I provided a break-down of each athlete's actions and situated their actions in terms of the following:

1. *Who* is performing it;

[16]See the discussions about meta-conceptualization and how experiences shape implicit knowledge in chapter 2.

2. *What* they are doing during this performance/*How* the resistant act is being conducted;
3. *When* this resistant act performed (which refers to chronological time and/or kairotic time);
4. *Where* this resistant act performed, which refers to a dominant space/place.[17] The space can be either physical or virtual, as long as there is a public who can access and engage with the act; and
5. *Why* this resistant act is being performed, which refers to precipitating events—both specific and general.[18]

On December 6, 2014, during pre-game warmups before his game against the Golden State Warriors, Derrick Rose—then point guard for the Chicago Bulls—wore a t-shirt with the quote "I CAN'T BREATHE" on the front. On August 14th, 16th, and 26th of 2016, during the pre-season, Colin Kaepernick—then quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers—sat on the bench during the National Anthem. On September 1st, 12th, and 18th of 2016, he began kneeling instead. And on August 31st, September 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th of 2020, Naomi Osaka—professional tennis player—wore a different face mask during each match of the 2020 U.S. Open, each of which bore the name of a Black victim of racial violence and police brutality. The words on Rose's t-shirt echoed the last words of Eric Garner, who was killed earlier that year by Daniel Pantaleo, a New York City police officer, who killed him using a banned chokehold. Kaepernick's protests were precipitated by the July 5th death of Alton Sterling and the July 6th death of Philando Castille. Sterling was killed when he was shot six times by then Baton Rouge

[17] The definition for dominant space can be found in the section discussing *Where* below.
[18] Even though *why* is an element for analysis on *The PSR Puzzle* and is presented on the data collection tool, I contend that the *why* is already embedded in and serves as the tether that connects each element of this conversation to every other element. Therefore, I've opted to not discuss it separately within the context of this work.

police officer Blane Salamoni, and Castille was killed the next day when he was shot seven times by St. Anthony, Minnesota police officer Jeronimo Yanez after being pulled over for a broken taillight. And Osaka's decision to don masks with the names of Black victims of racist violence comes on the heels of one of the most notable killings—that of George Floyd on May 25th, 2020 by Minneapolis police officer, Derek Chauvin.

PSR Puzzle as a Data Collection Tool				
Who: *Who*—is performing the resistant act? *Who* refers to someone who does not hold power in the traditional sense—someone whose voice has been historically muted, leading to their inability to attain economic, social, and/or political power. Because of *who* they are and their place in society, their ability to have their grievances heard, legitimized, and ultimately addressed have been thwarted. We typically refer to these groups as *marginalized populations* because they exist on the margins of our societies, meaning that they are not simply excluded from the power itself, but that they are also excluded from access to the methods that could potentially afford them with opportunities to attain power.	**What/How:** *What*—are they doing during this performance? *How*—is this resistant act being conducted? This aspect of *PSR* pertains specifically to the physical act (as opposed to the metaphorical act). The *what* here refers specifically to the performer's *act* or *action*—the use of their physical body to engage in a symbolic act or action. Within the context of *PSR*, the *how* is in the form of a non-verbal act.[19]	**When:** *When*—is this resistant act performed? This aspect of *PSR* refers to both the chronological time and kairotic time.	**Where:** *Where*—is this resistant act performed? The location of the act must be a White-dominant space. The space can be either physical or virtual, as long as there is a public who can access and engage with the act.	**Why:** *Why*—is this resistant act being performed? More specifically, what is/are the precipitating act(s)? This aspect of *PSR* pertains to the events—both specific and collective—that shape the performer's consciousness an such a way that they are compelled to engage in an act/action to demonstrate their stance on the issue at hand.
Derrick Rose	Garment Activism—Wearing "I Can't Breathe" T-shirt	**Protest Date(s):** -December 6, 2014 **Preceding/During What Event:** -Preceding NBA game -During pre-game warmups before the Golden State Warriors vs. Chicago Bulls game	Basketball Court	--precipitated by Eric Garner's murder on July 17th, 2014 by Daniel Pantaleo, a New York City police officer, who killed him using a banned chokehold (Rose, p. 48)
Colin Kaepernick	Sitting Kneeling	**Pre-season Protest Dates:** -August 14, 2016 -August 16, 2016 -August 26, 2016 **Regular Season Protest Dates:** -September 1, 2016 -September 12, 2016 -September 18, 2016 **Preceding/During What Event:** -Preceding NFL games -During the National Anthem	Football field sidelines	--precipitated by the deaths of Alton Sterling on July 5, 2016 and Philando Castille on July 6, 2016 --to bring attention to racial and social inequality in the U.S.
Naomi Osaka	Garment Activism—Wearing Face Masks	**Protest Date(s):** -August 31, 2020 -September 2, 2020 -September 4, 2020 -September 6, 2020 -September 8, 2020 -September 10, 2020 -September 12, 2020 **Preceding/During What Event:** -Preceding each match of the 2020 U.S. Open	Tennis Court	--Jacob Blake --Breonna Taylor --Elijah McClain --precipitated by George Floyd's death on May 25th, 2020 This *PSR* was preceded by Osaka's decision to boycott the Western and Southern Open semifinal match in response to Jacob Blake's shooting https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/16/sports/tennis/naomi-osaka-protests-open.html

Table 2. *The PSR Puzzle* as a Data Collection Tool

[19]Even though *what/how* of *PSR* pertains to the use of the body to engage in a non-verbal symbolic act, it is important to note that non-verbal does not mean non-communicative. For Rose and Osaka, the words and names are an essential part of the *PSR* because they provide a necessary contextualization for their garment activism.

In the analysis to follow, I examine Rose's, Osaka's, and Kaepernick's use of tactics to engage in resistant acts. This specific analysis draws from and aligns with Ridolfo's concept of rhetorical velocity in that the analysis considers each athletes' activist performances—or their delivery—as a rhetorical mode (rhetorical analysis). Central to my argument is the claim that Black professional athletes use embodied performance and spaces and places as communicative tools to engage in rhetorical acts against hegemonic power structures. Part of my contention is that there is an interplay at work between resistant acts and the spaces and places in which they are performed; however, I also contend that who is performing these acts, how they are performed, when they are performed, and where they are performed are intrinsically linked. Therefore, even though each piece of *The PSR Puzzle* will be addressed separately, overlap between them in the following sections is to be expected.

Who

Within *The PSR Puzzle, who* is the person performing the act and refers to someone who does not hold power in the traditional sense—someone whose voice has been historically muted, leading to their inability to attain economic, social, and/or political power. In other words, in order for an act to be *PSR*, it must be performed by someone who has at least one identity that has been marginalized and who, in the relevant context, is speaking from the sidelines and not the center. Because of *who* they are and their place in society, their ability to have their grievances heard, legitimized, and ultimately addressed have been thwarted. We typically refer to these groups as *marginalized populations* because they exist at the margins of our societies—both literally and figuratively. This means that they are not simply excluded from the power itself, but that they are also excluded from access to the methods that could potentially afford them with opportunities to attain power—methods that have and continue to be practiced through

the use of physical and psychological violence (i.e. inscriptive practices). This serves as the impetus for professional athletes like Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick to engage in *PSR*. However, even though they are engaging in acts individually, it is imperative that we recognize that their individual acts of *PSR* also demonstrate their connection to the collective fear, frustration, angst, and/or anger—i.e. their connection to an existing group consciousness surrounding the issues of racial violence and police brutality. If we situate the individual instances that propelled Rose and Osaka to act alongside Kaepernick's reflection of the many different spaces in which he saw "Black death," we are not only able to view their individual protest acts as personal resistances to the ongoing broader social issues of racial inequality and police violence; we are also able to understand them as part of a collective and continuous activism being performed by others who identify with each other through a shared consciousness.

Generally speaking, the question of *who* we are may read as simple. However, it is actually quite complex and layered. At its most basic level, who we are—or how we identify—can be answered by a name. However, another layer of how we identify is evidenced through and by our connections to other people. Our lineage, our cultures, our ethnicity, our professions—any and all of these have the power to establish and shape those connections. And as stated in the previous chapter, social constructions of race—bound up in inscription and manifested in and through inscriptive practices—work to impose a societal identification based on skin color. For Black activists like Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick, who have engaged in *PSR,* it is the latter to which they have responded—and their responses were efforts to express (at least to some degree) what Johnson (2003) referred to as inexpressible—the "undeniable racial experience of black people" (p. 8). The racial experience to which Johnson referred—which is inherently linked to inscription and inscriptive practices—results in this acquisition of experienced-based knowledge,

which Polanyi described as tacit (implicit) knowledge. This identify-shaping, experience-based knowledge, constructed as a result of the "living of blackness" (Williams,1997), is what Johnson referred to as a "material way of knowing" (p. 8). I contend that it is this material way of knowing that helps construct, continuously re-construct, and maintain the collective group consciousness, and it is this connection to the group consciousness that leads Black professional athletes[20] like Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick from thinking about social injustices to using their platforms to engage in resistant acts such as *PSR.* My contention aligns with Bormann's ideas about group consciousness. In his article "Symbolic Convergence Theory: A Communication Formula," Bormann (1985) focused on the notion that a group consciousness is derived from "recurring communicative forms and patterns" (p. 129) in addition to "shared fantasies,"[21] (p. 134) which are derived through a collective sharing of narratives that "account for their experiences and their hopes and fears" of those within the group (p. 130).[22] I want to focus briefly on Borman's discussion about recurring patterns and shared fantasies and their connection to group consciousness. This is a crucial part of understanding the *who* in *PSR,* generally; but more specifically, within the context of these examples, it plays a vital role in helping us understand how engagement in acts of *PSR* serve as an identifier for Black

[20] Even though each athlete occupies an identity that has been marginalized, each athlete's celebrity status also provides them with particular cultural capital that has made their protests well known. For a discussion of how their celebrity statuses impact their protest tactic choices, see the upcoming *When and Where* section.

[21] Used as a technical term in symbolic convergence theory, "fantasy" refers to the creative and imaginative shared interpretation of events that fulfills a group psychological or rhetorical need. For a specific example of this fantasy-at-work from the position of a White supremacist imaginary, see Embrick and Moore's (2020) article "White Space(s) and the Reproduction of White Supremacy" in which they analyze Amy Cooper's actions again Christian Cooper in March of 2020 in Central Park in New York City.

[22] Even though my primary focus here is on Black professional athletes as the *who* engaging in *PSR*, there are at least two distinct groups to be considered when analyzing resistant acts through the lens of *Performative Symbolic Resistance*—those who agree with the arguments being presented via the symbolic performances and those who find the argument problematic. These two groups embrace two very distinct and opposing shared fantasies regarding how things are and should be, demonstrated by their acceptance or rejection of recurring societal patterns.

Additionally, there are at least 2 distinct "recurring communicative forms and patterns": 1) the one that creates the need for Black professional athletes to engage in *PSR* (i.e. inscriptive practices), and 2) the continuous recurring acts of *PSR* themselves. It is, therefore, not a comprehension of the symbol that is the point of contention (for the symbol/symbolic act is understood by both groups); it is, instead, each group's "shared fantasies" that impact how they engage with the convergent symbols.

professional athletes.

For Black professional athletes engaging in *PSR*, their decisions to use their bodies as and to engage in resistant rhetorics are responses to our society's on-going inscriptive practices discussed in chapter 2—practices that I contend are recurring communication forms and patterns designed to maintain the hegemonic status quo. For Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick, each athlete's individual act reflected their individual consciousness; however, it also reflected the group consciousness of those impacted by inscription and inscriptive practices—a group consciousness that tethers group members through what Bormann referred to a "shared fantasy" (p. 134):

> Shared fantasies are coherent accounts of experience in the past or envisioned in the future that simplify and form the social reality of the participants. No matter how apocalyptic or utopian, the audience's shared dreams provide comprehensible forms for thinking about and experiencing the future. Fantasy themes are always slanted, ordered, and interpreted; they provide a rhetorical means for large segments of the audience to account for and explain the same experiences or events in different ways. (p. 134)

For those connected to the specific group consciousness demonstrated by acts of *PSR*, shared fantasies[23] are often tied to experiences in the past—and to the continuations in the present. For example, the April 18th, 2021 issue of *The New York Times* stated, "Since testimony [in the Derek Chauvin trial] began on March 29, at least 64 people have died at the hands of law enforcement nationwide, with Black and Latino people representing more than half of the dead." These past and on-going violent acts create a collective fear for those linked to the group consciousness. For Derrick Rose, those shared fantasies are largely shaped by fears of physical and psychological violence, and they are embedded in his kinship connections and his awareness

[23] A thorough discussion of shared fantasies as a way of thinking about and experiencing the future will be presented in chapter 4 during the discussion of intentionality and *telos*.

of what may happen when his child or his other family members encounter police officers. After wearing the "I Can't Breathe" t-shirt during pre-game warmups before the December 6, 2014 game between the Golden State Warriors and the Chicago Bulls game, Rose described those fears to Sean Highkin with *Bleacher Report* (2014):

> I'm a parent now. I had a kid two years ago. It probably would have been different [before his son was born]. I probably wouldn't have worn the shirt. But now that I'm a dad, it's just changed my outlook on life, period. I don't want my son growing up being scared of the police or having the thought that something like that could happen. I have a cousin, that easily could have been him, or that easily could have been one of our relatives. It's sad that people lost their lives over that.

In his book *I'll Show You,* Rose (2019) elaborated on and clarified his activism, situating his individual protest within a broader social context:

> And how come with our drugs, we go to jail? Isn't alcohol a drug? Tobacco? But too many white businesses make money on that, so that's okay. So you think more people are getting killed driving with drugs or driving drunk? But it's the African American community that's the problem? That's why I wore the "I Can't Breathe" T-shirt after Eric Garner was killed in New York. (pp. 47-48)

For Naomi Osaka, these fears are connected to her understanding that youth or age does not prevent a Black person from becoming the victim of racial violence, as was the case with Trayvon Martin. When asked how she was affected by this ongoing racial violence, she replied, "I mean of course everyone's really sad reading into it. For me, I think the one that most affected me was Trayvon Martin because I was young when that happened, and I just remember it shaping a little bit the way that I think; shaping, sort of, my fears sometimes" (Riddell, 2020).

Their fears—and their reactions to them—represent the fears and reactions of Black Americans across this nation who share this group consciousness as well as a collective grief. In her interview with Ken Gordon (2021) of *The Columbia Dispatch*, Sheronda Palmore, a licensed mental health worker for Mental Health America of Ohio, described the fear expressed by Rose and Osaka and the angst and anger demonstrated in the more recent collective protests in her state:

> I remember last year, after George Floyd, people having this sense of grief, like, that could have been my brother or uncle or loved one. There is a collective experience that takes place that is rooted a great deal in the historical and present system of racism. You can't be disconnected from that because it hits way too close to home. That could have been someone I know, and that's overwhelming when you walk out that door and you don't know if today is the day you could run into someone and you don't know how they will respond to you.

Palmore's words were spoken in the wake of the recent killings of Miles Jackson, Andre Hill, and Casey Goodson, Jr.—all of whom were killed by law enforcement officers in central Ohio in 2021. And even more recently, groups have gathered to protest the killing of Daunte Wright on April 11, 2021, by former Minneapolis police officer Kim Potter (which is, notably, also where George Floyd was killed by a police officer in 2020 and Philando Castille in 2016).

Even though Kaepernick doesn't explicitly state that his activism is linked to fear, it can certainly be linked to the collective frustrations of the group consciousness—frustrations with social systems that fail to hold those engaging in inscriptive practices accountable. When asked what he was trying to accomplish with his protests, Kaepernick stated, "Ultimately, it's to bring awareness and make people realize what's really going on in this country. There are a lot of

things that are going on—they're unjust. People aren't being held accountable for and that's something that needs to change. This country stands for freedom, liberty, justice for all and it's not happening for all" (Colin Kaepernick transcript, 2016).

And their fears and frustrations of Rose, Osaka, Kaepernick, and Palmore are justified. In their December 2020 article titled "Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Firearm-Related Pediatric Deaths Related to Legal Intervention," Gia M. Badolato et al. presented the results of their cross-sectional study in which they used data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web-Based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS)[24] to measure racial and ethnic differences in adolescent mortality rates related to firearm injury from law enforcement over a 16-year period (between 2003 and 2018). According to their data, Hispanic children are 3 times more likely to be shot to death than white children, and Black children are 6 times more likely to be shot to death by police than their white peers. This data is displayed on the graph and table below.

[24] WISQARS collects data from death certificates compiled by the National Center for Health Statistics.

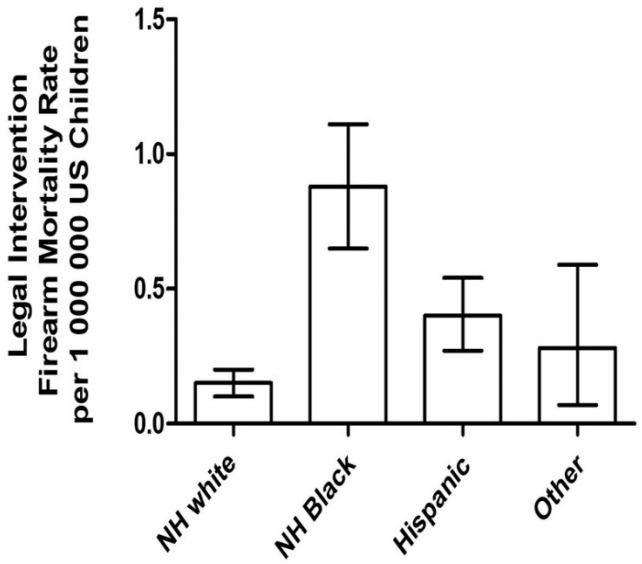

Figure 5. Graph showing racial and ethnic differences in adolescent mortality rates related to firearm injury from law enforcement

Characteristics of Study Population, 2003–2018, *N* = 131

	Firearm-Related Mortality by Legal Intervention, *n* (%)
Race and/or ethnicity	
NH white	34 (26.52)
NH Black	55 (41.98)
Hispanic	35 (26.71)
Other	7 (5.34)
Sex	
Female	9 (6.87)
Male	122 (93.13)
Urbanization classification	
Metropolitan areas	1254 (94.66)
Nonmetropolitan areas	7 (5.34)
US census region	
Northeast	16 (12.21)
South	46 (35.11)
Midwest	26 (19.85)
West	43 (32.82)

Figure 6. Table showing racial and ethnic differences in adolescent mortality rates related to firearm injury from law enforcement

Their research found that Black and Hispanic children are disproportionate victims in fatal police shootings, which aligns with the American Public Health Association's (APHA) (2018) analysis of this issue. In "Addressing Law Enforcement Violence as a Public Health Issue" (policy statement number 201811), APHA categorizes law enforcement violence as a public health issue. Their policy statement states the following:

> Physical and psychological violence that is structurally mediated by the system of law enforcement results in deaths, injuries, trauma, and stress that disproportionately affect marginalized populations (e.g., people of color; immigrants; individuals experiencing houselessness; people with disabilities; the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer [LGBTQ] community; individuals with mental illness; people who use drugs; and sex workers).

This data only supports what Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick attempt to demonstrated in their acts of *PSR* and what Mills established in his Racial Contact theory—that there is a perpetual race-

based ideology that is embedded within our society's social contract. It is an ideology that shifts blame from perpetrators to victims while often refusing to even acknowledge the existence of racism in our daily lives[25].

What/How

What and *how* are closely connected, overlapping concepts in *Performative Symbolic Resistance*, pertaining specifically to what specific physical act is used to symbolize resistance and how the physical body is used to perform the symbolic act. In the examples of *PSR* being discussed, *what* and *how* are intrinsically related. However, to understand that relationship, it is important to take a step back and gain an understanding of the divergent—yet interconnected—ways of perceiving rhetoric. In the *Defining Resistant Rhetoric* section above, I define resistant rhetoric as a rhetoric that is not just inherently social, cultural, and communal; it is one that does the work of pushing back against traditionally prescribed/ascribed hegemonic notions of how the world is or should be in the quest for power and empowerment, both personal and collective. This definition situates rhetoric in two ways: 1) as a state of being and 2) as a state of doing. Understanding rhetoric in this way provides us with dual—yet linked—approaches to interrogating *what* resistant acts are performed and *how* they are performed, which offers multiple ways of thinking about resistant acts such as *PSR*. More specifically, it provides us with a way to interrogate how the Black body is used in the garment activism of Rose and Osaka and the kneeling activism of Kaepernick.

This specific interrogation requires that we recognize the rhetorical nature of the body. Within the context of these specific examples, it requires that we recognize the rhetorical nature of the *Black* body. In chapter 2, I briefly discussed the collective work of Mills, Butler, DeLuca,

[25] For a recent example of this, see McFarling's April 6, 2021 article "Troubling Podcast Puts JAMA, the 'Voice of Medicine,' Under Fire for Its Mishandling of Race."

Chávez, Hawhee, and Burke, stating that it provides us with an intimate understanding of how the body is theorized and, therefore, perceived. I also stated that, as it pertains specifically to *PSR*, their work helps us develop understandings and awarenesses of how the *Black* body is perceived socially and societally—or what Johnson (2003) refers to as "racist constructions of blackness" (p. 7).

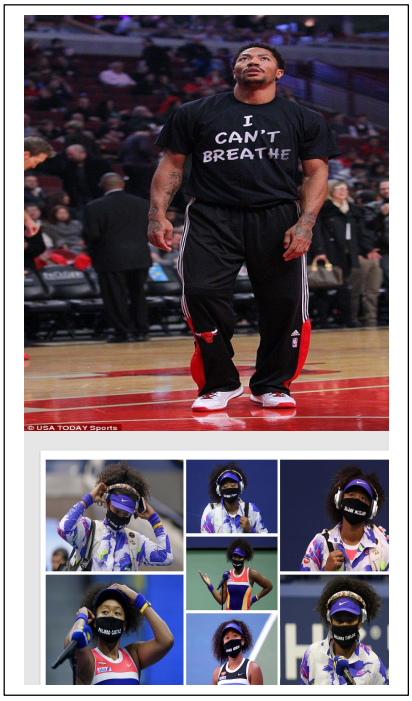

Figure 7. Images of Rose and Osaka performing Garment Activism

Figure 8. Image of Kaepernick performing kneeling activism

In the previous section, I situated the bodies of Black professional athletes engaging in *PSR* as tactical tools representing and engaging in resistant rhetorics in response to our society's on-going inscriptive practices discussed in chapter 2. Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick's protests are clear examples of resistant rhetorics in action. Figure 7 shows images of Derrick Rose and Naomi Osaka engaged in what I've categorized as garment activism. By placing the words "I CAN'T BREATHE" on a t-shirt and then wearing that t-shirt during pre-game warmups, Rose used his body as a tool for his own garment activism, protesting the death of Eric Garner, who

was killed on July 17th, 2014 by Daniel Pantaleo, a then New York City police officer. Likewise, Osaka used her body to engage in garment activism during the 2020 U.S. Open. Prior to each of her seven matches, spanning from August 31st through September 12th, Osaka wore a different facemask—each with the name of a different person killed from racial violence or police brutality. In each case, clothing (cloth/material/fabric) was used as a medium for displaying a written thought, idea, or concept. Figure 8 shows Colin Kaepernick's kneeling activism, which was done to protest the killing of Black people in this country and the fact that the killers were not being held accountable. Even though he initially sat on the bench away from the field's immediate sidelines during the 2014 pre-season, he moved his protest to the field's immediate sidelines during the first three games of the regular season. As a result of each athlete's decision to engage in *PSR*, each athlete then became a literate and literal display of their consciousness. Their use of their corporeal body to engage in this display (i.e. to engage in a resistant rhetoric) then created an opportunity for their bodies to *become* resistant rhetorics.[26]

When and Where

(Taking Advantage of) Kairotic Moments: The Right Time, The Right Place

Before engaging in *PSR*, Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick had to consider when and where they would engage in their protest. The fact that these two concepts (time and location) cannot be wholly extricated from each other when engaging in acts of *PSR* required a simultaneous consideration of 1) chronological and kairotic time and 2) the dominant space in which the act would be performed. As professional athletes, Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick gained 1) *access* to

[26] In this project, I connect the *PSR* of Rose and Osaka through their engagement in garment activism. However, I recognize that there is another level of interaction between the body and Osaka wearing names on her face mask. Because the masks cover her mouth, there is also the connection to the physical voice/physical act of speaking. More recently, Osaka's recent refusal to talk to the press and then her subsequent withdrawal from the 2021 French Open also demonstrates a choice to literally self-silence. This offers the possibility for analysis outside of this project's scope.

white-dominant, mediated spaces and places that lay people don't have access to, and 2) *opportunities* to engage in public protest in these spaces and places. The (professional, NBA) basketball court/arena, the (professional) tennis court/arena, and the (professional, NFL) football field/arena—each place was available to each athlete because of the celebrity status afforded them due to their athletic prowess. This access to these spaces and their opportunities to play in these spaces also provided them with opportunities to engage in demonstrations that symbolize their feelings about occurring and recurring social injustices. But how does this work? More specifically, what does gaining access to these spaces (where) at these times (when) allow Black professional athletes to *do*?

To answer these questions, I looked at the *PSR* acts of Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick in terms of the Ancient Greek rhetorical concept of *kairos,* which Kinneavy (1986) defined as "the right or opportune time to do something, or right measure in doing something" (p. 80). In his work *Kaironomia: On the Will to Invent,* White (1987) described *kairos* through its two different origin stories: 1) through its connection to archery, as "an opening or 'opportunity' or, more precisely, a long tunnel like aperture through which the archer's arrow has to pass," and 2) through its connection to weaving, as "a 'critical time' when the weaver must draw the yarn through a gap that momentarily opens in the warp of the cloth being woven" (p.13). Smith (2002) described the term by differentiating kairotic time from chronological time. He referred to chronos as "the fundamental conception of time as measure, as quantity of duration, the length of periodicity," and kairos as "the special position an event or action occupies in a series, to a season when something appropriately happens that cannot happen just at 'any time', but only that time, to a time that marks an opportunity what may not recur" (p.47). And Miller (2002) associated one specific understanding of the term with Gorgias, describing it as "the uniquely

timely, the spontaneous, the radically particular" (p. xiii).

Each of these understandings of *kairotic* time—as opportune and critical; as not just 'any time' but only that time; and as uniquely timely, the spontaneous, the radically particular—is relevant to this analysis of the *PSR* acts of Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick. For Rose and Kaepernick—both of whom participate in group sports—the opportune moment was before their games began. These were opportune moments in this context because the focus had not yet turned to the team as a collective, which would occur once the games began. By engaging in the act during the pregame rituals, each athlete was able to use that time and place/space to differentiate themselves from everyone else. Likewise, Osaka was able to use the time before her matches as to engage in *PSR*. By wearing the masks as she walked onto the court and during her pre-match warmups, she was able to use that time—that critical juncture between pre-match warmups and matches—as an opportunity to draw attention to herself, attention linked specifically to her protest efforts. In addition, each athlete had to be in the right place during that time. Their access to white-dominant spaces—professional sports arenas—coupled with their access to time-based opportunities (pre-game/pre-match) provided them with ideal kairotic opportunities to engage in *PSR*.

However, I also contend that what contributed to the effectiveness of these kairotic moments for each athlete is not just where they were or when they performed their act—it was their body's theorization coupled with their "hypervisibility" (Williams, 1997). In "The Pantomime of Race," Williams (1997) stated the following: "How, or whether, Blacks are seen depends upon a dynamic of display that that ricochets between hypervisibility and oblivion." By using those opportune moments to engage in garment and kneeling activism, each athlete drew attention to themselves, making him- or her-self hypervisible. But for Black bodies, "bodies that

always, already exist "out of sync with 'normal' societal rhythms" (Hawhee, 2009, p. 14), this state of hypervisibility served as an opportunity for the person to use their body—in that space, at that time—to become and engage in a resistant rhetoric. By engaging in those acts in those spaces at those specific kairotic moments, they were able to, essentially, flip inscription on its head—using it and their hypervisibility to achieve their purpose. This state of inherent disruptive-ness and this social construction/misconstruction make bodies prime tools to be used in the strategic performance of resistant acts and to be examined as sites of resistance.

Analyzing the Data

In the previous section, I situated the bodies of Black professional athletes engaging in *PSR* as tactical tools representing and engaging in resistant rhetorics in response to our society's on-going inscriptive practices discussed in chapter 2. The question then becomes *what does being in a dominant space—in a manner that does not conform to the normal expectations for that space—do?* Before answering that question, it is necessary that we consider the following questions: *1) What are the normal expectations for dominant spaces? How do the PSR acts performed by Black professional athletes in these spaces demonstrate divergent understandings of American-ness?* In order to answer these questions, we must first understand two things: what makes a space dominant, and what the normal expectations for these spaces are.

Defining and Establishing Normal Expectations for Dominant Space(s)

Within the context of this work, I define dominant space as follows:

A white-dominant space is an environment—either physical or virtual—that has historically been controlled by and served white Americans.[27]

[27] I intentionally use the phrase "white-dominant" for three reasons: 1) to describe dominant spaces because whiteness so often derives power from going unmarked, 2) to describe these specific dominant spaces since there are other ways of being dominant (e.g male-dominant), and 3) as a rhetorical demarcation to distinguish them from non-

This definition conflates the work of Shome (2003), Embrick and Moore (2020), and Jackson (emailed correspondence dated 5/18/2021).

In "Space Matters," Shome (2003) described space:

> Space is not merely a backdrop, though, against which the communication of cultural politics occurs. Rather, it needs to be recognized as a central component in that communication. It functions as a technology—a means and medium—of power that is socially constituted through material relations that enable the communication of specific politics. (p. 40)

This description of space helps us see the possibilities of space usage, specifically in terms of *PSR*. It provides an actual space in which protest can be engaged; however, the act of engaging in protest within that space makes it a medium—a tactical tool to be used in the conveyance of sentiment. In addition, it aligns with our understanding that spaces can be both technical and rhetorical simultaneously, which connects with the on-going conversations by scholars in the fields/disciplines of Rhetoric and Technical and Professional Communication (see Haas, 2012; Frost & Eble, 2015; Frost, 2016; Shelton, 2019).

In "White Space(s) and the Reproduction of White Supremacy," Embrick and Moore (2020) described White spaces, drawing from the work of Bracey and Moore (2017):

> Much like during Jim Crow Apartheid, Black and Brown people entering White space(s) comes with unspoken rules that any disruption of White entitlement to the free and full enjoyment of that space and its resources can lead Whites to lay formal claim to that space. (p. 1938)

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dominant spaces as described by Sarah J. Jackson (e.g. the Black church, historically Black media, gay bars, the feminist press, clubs for people with disabilities, etc.). (See footnote #28 for Jackson's complete comment about dominant and non-dominant spaces.)

And in an emailed correspondence, Jackson (2021) described dominant space/institutions as follows:

> …those that have historically been controlled by and served white Americans (of course, that also means white/men/straight/able-boded/etc Americans)…as opposed to non-dominant spaces like, for example, the Black church, historically Black media, gay bars, the feminist press, clubs for people with disabilities, etc."

These descriptions work together to help us consider space within a historical context—as being originally exclusive and engaging in exclusionary practices. Even though many of the dominant spaces were built by Black bodies engaging in Black labor, they were controlled by and built specifically for white Americans. As such, the rules for behavior within those spaces do not allow for behavior that challenges the established status quo. (See Chapter 2's section titled *Understanding Social and Societal Contexts: Mills' Racial Contract Theory.*)

In his article "Postures of Piety and Protest: American Civil Religion and the Politics of Kneeling in the NFL," Sabella (2019) focused on expectations specifically for the NFL football field—expectations that are the result of 1) the lack of and need for an American civic religion (Bellah [1967] 2005), and that 2) are shaped by the need to maintain docile bodies (Foucault). Borrowing the term "civic religion" from Rousseau, American sociologist Robert N. Bellah defined American civic religion as "this public religious dimension…expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals" (p. 42). Sabella summarized Bellah's ideas:

> Bellah argued that, in the absence of a national church, America still needed a group identity rooted in a shared set of traditions and values. Cultivating this identity required civic displays and observances that collectively supplied a "religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life"… Over time, this public religious dimension has

> developed such that there now "exists alongside of and rather clearly differentiated from the churches an elaborate and well-institutionalized civil religion in America" (p. 42). (Sabella, p. 450)

In order for this American civic religion to persist, people must embrace a uniform belief system and then perpetually act based on the norms established by that system. Spectator sports and athletic venues provide ideal opportunities for the demonstration of belief systems because they rely heavily on the use of rituals and symbolic gestures—such as paying homage to the flag during the national anthem. However, this uniform engagement in the rituals and symbolic gestures requires docile bodies. If we look at docility through a Foucauldian lens, then we realize that docility is not equated with stillness or passivity—it is equated with conformity for bodily behavior in given contexts. As noted historian, author, and educator Carter G. Woodson (1933, 2000) stated in *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, "When you control a man's thinking, you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him to stand here or go yonder. He will find his 'proper place' and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit" (p.xix). The establishment of a uniform belief system found within American civic religion requires a type of psychological control—a control of a person's thinking. If we then look at "the world of sports" as an American civic religion having "its own, unique moral geography" with designated "events, symbols, and structures" (Remillard, 2015, p. 2888), then it is easy to see how any deviation from the tenets of that religion—such as the acts of *PSR* being discussed—can be problematic for those whose shared fantasy is shaped by an American civic religion which necessitates docile bodily behavior. I offer the following contentions: First, I contend that the Black identity is always, already apart from the established American national identity

perpetuated within professional athletic venues through rituals and symbolic gestures and can thus be categorized as a "non-national identity" (Jackson, 2014, p. 165). And second, I contend that Black professional athletes are active agents using their bodies as tactical tools to do this discursive work—the work of countering or pushing back against the traditionally prescribed/ascribed hegemonic notions of how the world is or should be.

Symbolizing Divergent Understandings of American-ness

In the previous section I briefly discussed normal expectations for professional athletic venues, focusing on Bellah's concept of American civic religion and Foucault's docile bodies to answer the question *What are the normal expectations for the space?* Next, I want to briefly discuss how the *PSR* acts performed by Black professional athletes in these spaces demonstrate divergent understandings of American-ness, beginning with this contention:

> Because American civic religion as demonstrated at professional athletic events (i.e. standing and/or placing one's hand over one's heart during the national anthem) is linked to a specific American identity, the issue then becomes what the American group identity IS—specifically in terms of who is included in and excluded from the group.

For Black people in the United States, the tacit/experiential knowledge derived from inscription and inscriptive practices has and continues to shape understandings of American-ness, resulting in a tangential relationship with the notion of a single, singular American identity. In their article "American Football and National Pride: Racial Differences," Sorek and White (2016) used statistics from Scripps and Gallop surveys to examine the relationship between fandom in football and national pride, as a specific dimension of national identity. When fans were asked to "Describe your feelings of patriotism," white football fans' national pride was significantly higher than that of Black fans (p. 272-273). The authors offered the following as

part of their conclusion:

> The sizable positive association between football fandom and national pride among whites suggests that the football spectacle may facilitate more favorable national sentiment among white fans. The negative association among African Americans suggests black fans may experience a very different game. (p. 274)

They also offered other postulations that are relevant here:

1. The experience of fandom for football may instead lower national pride among African Americans, both because national pride might clash with black pride and because successes of black players sharpen the contrast between the meritocratic order of athleticism on the field and the everyday experiences of racial injustice outside the stadium. (p. 276)
2. The latent coding of symbols of American national identity in the football stadium as white may provoke black fans to disassociate themselves from American national pride. (p. 276)
3. If black football fans tend to associate American national identity with whiteness, the visibility of American national symbols may be interpreted as exclusionary and pose another source of antagonism. (p. 267)

Even though their data is not conclusive, and even though they focused specifically on football, their postulations do provide us with things to consider regarding how different cultural groups and ethnicities connect or don't connect with symbols associated with American identity. Greene et al. (2020) examined the topic of American identity as well, focusing on its connection to political participation. In their work titled "Americanness and the 'Other' Americans," the authors used the 2016 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey to examine peoples'

feelings of Americanness. Focusing on the concepts of "allegiance" to America and senses of "belonging" (p. 396), the authors found—not surprisingly—that Whites tended to express the highest levels of American identity, seeing themselves as strongly belonging to America (p. 410). In contrast, the other racial and ethnic minorities surveyed scored significantly lower on the *sense of belonging* scale (p. 410-411). However, when examining the *allegiance to the country* responses, they found that (with Asians being the exception) allegiance is not thought about in conjunction with racial or ethnic relations (p. 412). This indicates that despite the tangential connection to American identity resulting from racial inequality and discrimination, people from marginalized populations still embrace a sense of allegiance to this country.

For Black people in America, this dual connection to American-ness is not a new conversation. W.E.B. Dubois (1897) addressed it in "Strivings of the Negro People," describing it in this way:

> One feels his two-ness, — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body…He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without losing the opportunity of self-development.

When Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick used their bodies to perform resistance, their bodies then became symbols of the "two-ness" described by Dubois. They represented the ongoing "crisis, schism, and conflict" (Schechner, xi, 1988) experienced as a result of this two-ness, a two-ness resulting from the previously discussed inscription and inscriptive practices. Instead of their actions reflecting an anti-American sentiment as some have claimed, I contend that their actions *–within these dominant spaces*—allowed them to become the symbols of their desire for a resolution to this dual existence which continues to be enforced through acts of racial violence

and police brutality.

My discussions about the expectations for these dominant spaces and their connection to American-ness touch on the overlapping nature of the individual pieces of *The PSR Puzzle*. However, in order to continue this discussion and situate Rose's, Osaka's, and Kaepernick's *PSR* acts in terms of *when* and *where* they occur, it's vital that we take a step back and re-examine who these performers are again. As I stated in the *who* section above, who each performer is has to do with how they identify, and this identification is based largely on the tacit knowledge they've gained experientially—a knowledge that shapes their consciousness and allows them to connect to a specific group consciousness. Even though this identification provides opportunities for them to connect to a group consciousness, it does not automatically provide them with one essential thing they need to engage in *PSR*—that being access to dominant spaces. For each Black professional athlete, then, their status as a professional in their sport does the dual work of 1) adding an additional layer to who they are/their identity, and 2) directly impacting *when* and *where* they engage in their initial acts of *PSR.* In her book *Black Celebrity, Racial Politics, and the Press: Framing Dissent,* Jackson (2014) stated, "Those who gain access to dominant spaces[28] and opportunities to publicize such acts challenge…the publics they serve to define and redefine the boundaries of national discourse" (p. 165). She continues:

> …African American celebrities, while limited in institutional power and bound by particular political moments, are active agents using their bodies, access, and personas to

[28] In an email correspondence dated 5/18/2021, Jackson clarified her definition of dominant spaces/institutions for me:

"…those that have historically been controlled by and served white Americans (of course, that also means white/men/straight/able-boded/etc Americans). That is certainly what it means in this case – as opposed to non-dominant spaces like, for example, the Black church, historically Black media, gay bars, the feminist press, clubs for people with disabilities, etc.

I got the definitions and usage of dominant and non-dominant in talking about the public sphere from Catherine Squires' early work on the Black Public Sphere."

> interject counter discourses rooted in blackness into spaces and conversations that are otherwise constructed as having no place for non-national identities" (p. 165).

In their article "Location Matters: The Rhetoric of Place in Protest," Endres and Senda-Cook (2011) emphasized that there is an inherent connection between the bodies that protest and the places in which they protest. They situated both the body and the place within a rhetorical context, stating that "Not only are the bodies of protestors place-based rhetorical performances, but places are embodied rhetorical performances" (p. 263). In addition, they stated that "embodied rhetorics of protest are always situated in particular places" (p. 258). I agree with Endres and Senda-Cook's statement, but it begs the question *why*? The answer, I contend, is embedded in the fact that places and bodies are always, already entangled—to the point that they can never be fully separated from each other. As such, both the body and the place are necessary for rhetorical performances.

When Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick used these professional athletic spaces to perform resistant acts, they forced the audiences to come face-to-face with an alternative shared fantasy, one that countered the fantasy being perpetuated via the rituals and symbolic gestures being performed in the dominant spaces. By challenging the expected norms for behavior within those spaces, these activists challenged the norms embedded in the hegemonic narrative of American national identity. They used these spaces—and their bodies—to engage in acts that were not just social, cultural, and communal; they were also used to symbolize the pushing back against traditionally prescribed/ascribed hegemonic notions of how the world is or should be (see my definition of resistant rhetoric). The spaces and the bodies then become symbols of resistance, which deviates from the meanings assigned to both through the lens of American civic religion. This statement speaks to my contentions that space plays a vital role in *PSR* and that space's

rhetorical and technical nature makes it an ideal tool to be used in the activism of Black professional athletes.

Thus far, my discussion of these acts has emphasized the connection between the actions of each athlete. However, I would like to briefly shift the sole focus towards Kaepernick because there is one aspect of his *PSR* that I find concerning. Much of the analysis of Kaepernick's protest focuses on it from a religious perspective, specifically due to the connection between the kneeling act and Christianity.[29] However, I want to offer a different take on Kaepernick's kneeling—I contend that it is actually an example of his voice being *suppressed*.

Even though his initial protests involved sitting during the national anthem, Kaepernick changed his protest tactic at the behest of Retired Army Green Beret Nate Boyer. In his conversation with NPR's Michel Martin (2018) Boyer states, "I wrote this open letter that was just explaining my experiences, my relationship to the flag…I suggested him taking a knee instead of sitting even though I wanted him to stand, and he wanted to sit. And it was, like, this compromise that we sort of came to. And that's where the kneeling began." He continues:

> And, you know, people - in my opinions and in my experience, kneeling's never been in our history really seen as a disrespectful act. I mean, people kneel when they get knighted. You kneel to propose to your wife, and you take a knee to pray. And soldiers often take a knee in front of a fallen brother's grave to pay respects. So I thought, if anything, besides standing, that was the most respectful. But, of course, that's just my opinion.

Boyer's request is problematic on multiple levels. First, by proposing an alternative way to protest, Boyer's actions reflect a hegemonic mindset built on dominance and control. He co-

[29] See Sabella's (2019) discussion of this in his article's section titled "The NFL on Its Knees."

opted/hi-jacked Kaepernick's efforts to empower his voice and the voices of victims of racist violence and police brutality, to be certain. But what has yet to be considered is that by suggesting that Kaepernick—and convincing Kaepernick to—change his protest terms of *how* it was performed, he also usurped Kaepernick's power—at least on some levels. Secondly, Boyer's position regarding what is considered appropriate behavior for a [Black] body within a [white] dominant space does not come from the position of marginality; therefore, it cannot and does not take into account the role that theorization of the Black body has played and continues to play in our society.

As a body always, already exist "out of sync with 'normal' societal rhythms" (Hawhee, 2009, p. 14), the Black professional athlete's body's existence within that space—in *any* way that serves as a symbolic representations of a divergent world view—becomes a rhetorical, discursive, socially-transformative tool with the potential to disrupt the status quo, illustrate shared communal connections and group consciousness, and affect social action (Haas, 2012; Savage, 2004; Young & Robinson, 2018). For those who embrace the same shared fantasies and group consciousness as the protestor, the gesture is not problematic. But for those who do not embrace the same shared fantasy and group consciousness, the presence of a resistant rhetoric becomes sacrilegious and a punishment must be meted out. The most notable example of this has been in the case of Colin Kaepernick, whose punishment was not just swift—it has also been perpetual.

In the following chapter, I add an additional layer to the analysis of Rose's, Osaka's, and Kaepernick's acts of *PSR*. I embrace a critical analysis approach to analyze Black professional athletes' activist performances, focusing specifically on their effectiveness. Instead of focusing on delivery/rhetorical mode, this second part of the analysis considers Black professional

athletes' tactics and how they are being used strategically to achieve short- or long-term goals (critical analysis) (Ridolfo & DeVoss, 2009).

Chapter 4: Intentionality for Performative Symbolic Resistance

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I used rhetorical analysis to examine the specific elements of each Black professional athlete's use of *PSR*. However, rhetorical analysis is limited in that it only partially allows me to engage in the type of analysis required for determining if a protest act can be labeled as *PSR*. More specifically, rhetorical analysis does not allow for thorough, in-depth discussions of *intentionality*. Critical analysis *does*, providing an additional layer to the analysis by allowing for analysis of two specifics aspects of resistance acts: 1) the protestors' intentions and 2) their effectiveness. Embracing a critical rhetorical analysis approach to analyze Black professional athletes' activist performances, then, aligns with 1) Nonaka's (1994), Husserl's (1968), and Searle's (1983) ideas regarding *intention* and *intentionality* and 2) Ridolfo and DeVoss' (2009) concept of rhetorical velocity. In this chapter, I first offer a definition of *intentionality* specifically for *PSR,* drawing from the definitions and descriptions of *intentionality* presented by Nonaka, Husserl, and Searle. Second, I discuss how to determine intent in acts of *PSR*, using the post-game and post-match conversations of Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick as examples. Third, I discuss the role of space in *PSR*, particularly focusing on the concepts of publics and subaltern counterpublics. And finally, I discuss intentionality in *PSR*, focusing on effectiveness. I begin by examining the athletes' effectiveness in changing the meaning of their respective venue by using their protests to create "temporary fissures" in the spaces' meaning (Endres & Senda Cooke, 2011, p. 257). This will be followed by a discussion of *PSR* in relation to Ridolfo's concept of *rhetorical velocity*, specifically focusing on the role of *telos*[30] (i.e. end, purpose, goal, final function of an object) (Dimmock & Fisher, 2017). This will allow me to

[30] For a detailed discussion on the Greek term *telos*, see Dimmock and Fisher's *Ethics for A-Level.* The authors discuss this term and its connection to Aristotle, Aquinas, and to Bentham's moral theory of Utilitarianism.

discuss the acts of Rose, Kaepernick, and Osaka in terms of their effectiveness at engaging in resistant rhetoric.

Intentionality Defined

I define *intentionality for PSR* as follows:

> It is a consciousness/mental state—simultaneously self-referential and group-oriented—that arises when a person from a marginalized population (subject) pays attention to systems contributing to their marginalization (objects). It is a purpose-driven, action-oriented concept concerned with how marginalized populations try to make sense of their environment while simultaneously forming and engaging in approaches designed to critique and change the world in which they live for the betterment of those with whom they share a common group consciousness.

It is my contention that acts of *PSR* are intentionality *and* consciousness *and* group consciousness made manifest, existing as demonstrations of implicit/tacit knowledge made explicit (Nonaka) and intentionality of the mind made explicit (Searle). This description of *PSR* aligns with the definition of *meta* presented in chapter 2 as "showing or suggesting an explicit awareness of itself or oneself as a member of its category: cleverly self-referential." As I stated in chapter 1, the *why* in *The PSR Puzzle* focuses specifically on what events precipitated or preceded the resistant act. The notion of *intentionality* also focuses on *why*, but the focus shifts from viewing *why* in terms of specific and collective precipitating events (i.e. What happened?) to viewing *why* in terms of the activist's intended purposes for engaging in *PSR* (i.e. Why am I doing this? What am I hoping to achieve?). My stipulation that purpose is inherently part of intentionality—specifically within the context of *PSR*—connects directly with Nonaka's description of intention. Drawing from German philosopher Edmund Husserl's 1968 work,

Nonaka described intention as an "action-oriented concept…concerned with how individuals form their approach to the world and try to make sense of their environment" (p.17). It is this "attitude" resulting from a "consciousness of something" that Husserl referred to as *intentionality*, and it is "consciousness that arises when a subject pays attention to an object" (Nonaka, 1994, as cited in Husserl, 1968). Searle (1983) offered a thorough discussion on Intentionality[31] in his book *Intentionality.* Even though his primary focus was on speech acts, he presented a "preliminary formulation" of Intentionality—which he also referred to as "aboutness" or "directedness" and that also speaks to and informs the connection I'm establishing between *PSR* and intentionality:

> Intentionality is that property of many mental states and events by which they are directed at or about or of objects and states of affairs in the world. If, for example, I have a belief, it must be a belief that such and such is the case; if I have a fear, it must be a fear of something or that something will occur; if I have a desire, it must be a desire to do something or that something should happen or be the case; if I have an intention, it must be an intention to do something. (p. 1)

I want to briefly discuss Searle's concept of intentionality of the mind (p. 166) and causal self-referentiality (p. 49) here to help underlie the connection I've established exists between consciousness and intentionality whereas *PSR* is concerned. In chapter 2, I provided specific examples to illustrate that *PSR* is implicit/tacit knowledge made explicit. It is there where I also stated that by analyzing the protest acts of Black professional athletes through the lens of *PSR*, scholars are able to see how these acts exist as manifestations of this meta-conceptualization and as examples of implicit/tacit knowledge being made explicit. In the *who* section of chapter 3, I

[31] Because Searles capitalizes Intentionality throughout his work, I've maintained that format when specifically presenting his ideas.

discussed the fact that much of how we identify is based on our connections to other people. I connected this notion to Bormann's (1985) discussion regarding *group consciousness* in 2 ways: 1) as being derived from "recurring communicative forms and patterns" (p. 129); and 2) as being connected to "shared fantasies," which are created through a collective sharing of narratives that "account for their experiences and their hopes and fears" of those within the group (p. 130). Even though Searle does not focus specifically on group consciousness, his focuses on consciousness, intentionality of the mind, and causal self-referentiality connect with and speak to the ideas of Bormann and Husserl presented above. For Black professional athletes engaging in *PSR*, consciousness, group consciousness, and intentionality of the mind are intertwined, working together to establish and perpetually re-establish their connections to two groups of victims: 1) the group of people left to grapple with life in the wake of continuous victimization of Black people in this country, and 2) the group who have become victims of inscription and inscriptive practices as described in chapter 2.

Determining Intent

The first part of my definition of *intentionality for PSR* states that intentionality is a consciousness/mental state—simultaneously self-referential and group-oriented—that arises when a person from a marginalized population (subject) pays attention to systems contributing to their marginalization (objects). First, I want to stipulate that the subject and object have already been established in the previous chapter. Within the context of this dissertation, the *who* are Derrick Rose, Colin Kaepernick, and Naomi Osaka. The *why* are the individual and collective precipitating events leading up to their acts of *PSR*—i.e. the inscriptive practices that led to the deaths of Trayvon Martin, George Floyd, Eric Garner, Breonna Taylor, Philando Castille, and countless others. So the question then becomes 1) *how does one go about determining the*

consciousness or mental state of someone engaging in PSR—or more to the point—*how does one determine intent?*

Black professional athletes who use their access to dominant spaces as kairotic moments to engage in acts of *PSR* often provide us with insight into their consciousness/mental state/intent *after* the non-verbal act in the form of verbal communications, written communications, or both. Rose initially discussed his activism in post-game interviews immediately after the Golden State Warriors and the Chicago Bulls game when he expressed his concerns for his son and his other family members (see chapter 3). In a post-match interview, reporter Tom Rinaldi with Fox Sports asked Osaka, "What was the message you wanted to send?" Her response: "What was the message that you got was more the question. I feel like the point is to make people start talking" (The Undefeated tweet). When asked about her activism—specifically why she chose those names in particular—Osaka told reporters, "…I chose those names because some of them were very recent. Some of them I felt needed more attention, and—I don't know—I feel like there're stories that needed to be told…" (Riddell, 2020). And prior to her U.S. Open garment activism, after deciding to boycott her semifinal match of the Western & Southern Open in New York City slated for Thursday, August 27th, 2020, she tweeted that she hoped to "get a conversation started [about racial injustice and police brutality] in a majority white sport."

Figure 9. Osaka's Tweet dated August 26, 2020

Kaepernick's initial comments to reporters following his initial kneeling activism reflected a similar sentiment as Rose and Osaka. It was then when he indicated that his own goals for protesting were to draw people's attention to the racial injustice and police brutality and the lack of accountability. Unlike Rose and Osaka, however, Kaepernick's initial individual act of *PSR* was only the beginning of his activist efforts. In his October 6, 2020 article "The Demand for Abolition," he expounded on those initial comments:

> It's been four years since I first protested during "The Star-Spangled Banner." At the time, my protest was tethered to my understanding that something was not right. I saw the bodies of Black people left dead in the streets. I saw them left dead in their cars. I saw them left dead in their backyards. I saw Black death all around me at the hands of the police. I saw little to no accountability for police officers who had murdered them. It is not a matter of bad apples spoiling the bunch but interlocking systems that are rotten to their core.

He continued, describing his hope for the future:

> Despite the steady cascade of anti-Black violence across this country, I am hopeful we can build a future that imagines justice differently. A future without the terror of policing and

> prisons. A future that prioritizes harm reduction, redemption, and public well-being in order to create a more just and humane world.

For each or these athletes, the hypervisibility that occurred during their act of *PSR* allowed them to use their bodies and their respective athletic venues as tools in their resistant performances. However, it was the subsequent conversations—in the form of their verbal or written communications—that afforded them opportunities to clarify their intent. By using the multiple tools as their disposal, Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick were able to engage in a variety of languaging strategies to both establish and reify their stance on racial violence and police brutality against Black people in the United States.

The Role of Space

As previously stated, in the case of *PSR*, this definition of rhetoric—and more specifically, of a resistant rhetoric—is based on the idea that an individual can use their physical body to perform resistance while simultaneously using specific symbolic acts to 1) represent an idea or ideology and to 2) create or perpetuate a resistant rhetoric. By engaging in garment activism and kneeling activism, Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick have used their bodies *as* and *to engage in* resistant rhetoric. Even so, a body can only become a resistant rhetoric or engage in a resistant rhetoric in a dominant space and, therefore, can only engage in acts of *PSR* in dominant spaces. S*o what makes a space dominant?* In the previous chapter, I define dominant space as an environment—either physical or virtual—that has historically been controlled by and served white Americans. Athletic venues such as professional football and basketball stadiums and professional tennis courts certainly meet the criteria since they—and the sports that take place in them—were not intended for Black people. But now, I want to expand this definition of dominant space by considering what characteristic of the space makes it ideal for resistant

performances—that being the existence of an audience in the form of a public (Warner, 2002). Specifically, for Black professional athletes engaging in *PSR*, I rely on Warner's following two contentions about publics as they relate to the places and spaces in which protests are performed:

1. a public is a relation among strangers, and
2. a public is constituted through mere attention.

According to Warner, a public (theoretically) unites strangers through participation, resulting in a social "stranger relationality" (p. 56-57), and its existence is predicated by some degree of attention from its members (p. 61). I contend that as a result of racialization, each athlete perpetually exists as a stranger within the physical space of their respective athletic venue. It is not only their racialization that sets them apart, though—it is also their consciousness and connection to a group consciousness that differs from that established as appropriate for the space. One way to view those with this shared group consciousness is as a "subaltern counterpublic" (Fraser, 1990). According to Fraser, "…members of subordinated social groups-women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians-have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics" (p. 67). She elaborates:

> I propose to call these subaltern counterpublics in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs. (p. 67)

For Black people in this country whose experiential knowledge has been informed by the previously discussed racial and social contracts, the creation of a subaltern counterpublic is a necessary survival tactic, constrained by group cultural collective understanding—aka group

meta-conceptualization[32]. However, it is also the Black professional athlete's existence as part of a subaltern counterpublic—this existence as a stranger—that allows for protest-related hypervisibility. Even though they have gained access to the dominant space, their Blackness sets them apart—regardless of their athletic prowess. By engaging in *PSR* within these spaces, each athlete uses their body—a body that has historically been viewed through what Patricia Williams refers to as a voyeuristic "zoom lens"—to force the public to engage with the counterpublic. For Black professional athletes engaging in protest, having a public who experiences their protest—either positively or negatively—is mandatory. After all, the reality is that despite their celebrity statuses, if Rose, Osaka, or Kaepernick decided to engage in their individual acts where no audience or public was present, then their acts would not be a demonstration of a *PSR* since a resistant rhetoric is inherently social, cultural, and communal.

For Black professional athletes engaging in *PSR*, then, access to dominant spaces is vital because of the relationship between access to dominant spaces and power. Using Marxist theory, Henri Lefebvre (1991) developed a framework for studying spatial processes that emphasizes the connection between culture and political economy. He stated, "One of the consistent ways to limit the economic and political rights of groups has been to constrain social reproduction by limiting access to space" (p. 22). For Black professional athletes who now have access to these dominant spaces, access to publics provides opportunities for their implicit-made-explicit knowledge to be made visible and reproduced by those who share their sentiments. For those who embrace the same shared fantasies and group consciousness as the protestor, the gesture is not problematic. But for those who do not embrace the same shared fantasy and group consciousness, the presence of a resistant rhetoric is problematic. By deviating from the

[32] Refer back to chapter 2's discussion of meta- and meta-conceptualization.

prescribed norms of each space, each athlete intentionally increased their hypervisibility, forcing the audience to take notice of their message—willingly or not.

However, as these examples illustrate, each athlete's status as a professional athlete coupled with their decisions to engage in acts to increase their hypervisibility also provided them with post-game and post-match opportunities to articulate the arguments posed by their non-verbal protest act. Even though many athletes have worn "I CAN'T BREATHE" t-shirts in 2014 AND, more recently, in 2020 to protest the murder of George Floyd, Rose was the originator of this specific *PSR* demonstrated through this specific type of garment activism. And his subsequent communications—with reporters and in his autobiography—provide us with a window into his intentions. In the case of Osaka, I contend that 1) her existence as a Black person in a predominately white sport, 2) her existence in a sport that focuses on individual efforts, AND 3) her method of protest (that does the double work of protesting racial violence and police brutality AND reminding us of the current pandemic) all contributed to her ability to use hypervisibility to her advantage. And for Kaepernick—whose kneeling activism occurred in 2014—his intent continues to be made explicit in his on-going conversations, as can be seen in his "The Demand for Abolition" article.

The Protestors' Effectiveness

In order to further illustrate the connection between intentionality and *PSR*, I analyze the resistant acts of Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick in terms of their effectiveness at engaging in resistant rhetoric (verb) by addressing the following questions: *In this context, what's the criteria for determining success*? *Was the protest successful or not? How do we know?* To determine success, I consider two things: 1) how effective each athlete was at using *PSR* to change the meaning of the space and place in which it was performed, and 2) how effective each athlete was

at using *PSR* tactically to achieve short- and/or long-term goals or *telos*.

Changing the Meaning of the Space and Place

In order to determine each athlete's effectiveness at changing the meaning of their respective sports venue, the following questions must be considered: *What did this specific body engaging in this specific method of protest do to the space itself? How was the space or place changed to create new meaning*? In order to answer these questions, we must first consider the rhetorical nature of dominant spaces and places. Endres and Senda-Cook (2011) took up the task of examining the rhetorical nature of *place* in their article "Location Matters: The Rhetoric of Place in Protest." In this article, they presented the concept of "place in protest," offering it as "a heuristic framework…for theorizing the rhetorical force of place and its relationship to social movements" (p. 257). They explored how the "(re)construction of place may be considered a rhetorical tactic," describing how protest events can create "temporary fissures in the dominant meaning of places" (p. 257). By examining the role places play in social movements and activism, the authors conceptualized place as a rhetorical artifact that is both material and symbolic (p. 261). Focusing on the concept of "place-as-rhetoric," which "assumes that the very place in which a protest occurs is a rhetorical performance that is part of the message of the movement," the authors present three ways places act rhetorically:

1. by building on a pre-existing meaning of a place;
2. by temporarily reconstructing the meaning (and challenging the dominant meaning) of a place; and
3. by repeatedly reconstructing a place's meaning over time to create new place meanings (p. 259).

Endres and Senda-Cook examine each of these separately, but I contend that the *PSR* of Rose,

Osaka, and Kaepernick are examples of resistant performances that conflate all three. For example, even though athletic venues do not necessary hold relatively stable meanings associated with protest, they have been repeatedly *used* throughout history for that purpose. And even though these spaces may not be associated with nationalism ideology, per se, the rituals that occur within them (such as singing the anthem and paying homage to the flag) are nationalistic. The moments of and expectations for audience participation in these ritual performances do create *a pre-existing nationalistic meaning* for the space—specifically during these moments designated for ritualistic performances. This speaks to the Endres and Senda-Cook's contention that a place's meaning can be *temporarily reconstructed* during a protest event. Even though Rose and Osaka both temporarily reconstruct the meaning of their respective athletic venue by shifting the focus from the sporting event to their individual protest and the message they wanted to convey, it is Kaepernick's kneeling activism that is the most notable example because it was intentionally performed *during* the national anthem. Even though the space itself was an athletic arena, the specific rituals being performed before the games symbolized the nationalistic ideals of freedom, liberty, and justice which, according to Kaepernick, are "not happening for all" (Colin Kaepernick transcript, 2016). By engaging in *PSR* during that specific time in that specific space, he "highlight[ed] fissures in these ideals" (p. 266), ideals of American-ness/American identity that these ritualistic acts were supposed to symbolize.

It's also helpful to look at Rose's, Osaka's, and Kaepernick's actions collectively, which allows us to categorize them as types of *repeated reconstructions over time* (p. 259). Even though Endres and Senda-Cooke focus on repeated reconstruction of specific places, I contend that the same applies to specific *types* of places—such as professional sports venues. For example, on November 29, 2014, Ariyana Smith protested the killing of Michael Brown during

the national anthem of the game between Knox College and *Fontbonne University.* She walked out onto the basketball court at Knox College with her hands in their air, and then she lay on the court face-down for four and a half minutes to symbolize the four and a half minutes Michael Brown lay in the street after being killed in Ferguson, Missouri (Zirin, 2014). And before Game 4 of their Western Conference playoff series against Golden State, the Los Angeles Clippers basketball team walked to the center of the court and put their warm-up jerseys into a pile. They then wore red t-shirts turned inside out and wore black wrist or arm bands and black socks to protest the overt racism of the team's then-owner, Donald Sterling (Jacobs, 2020). As part of what Dr. Harry Edwards refers to as the "fourth wave of athlete activism"—activism beginning around 2010 to date—these athletes' protests (as well as Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick) are examples of Black athletes' continued use of athletic venues as the spaces for their protest efforts (Crenshaw). However, if we focus specifically on protests by professional athletes performed during the national anthem, such as Kaepernick's, then we can see a tether connecting his performance to that of Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf in 1996 during his career with the Denver Nuggets, that of Tommie Smith and John Carlos during the 1968 Olympics, and that of Eroseanna Robinson during the 1959 Pan Am Games (Zirin, 2014)—demonstrating a repeated reconstruction of a type of protest in a type of place (professional sports venue) over time. By challenging the expected norms for behavior within those spaces, each athlete created a temporary fissure in the meaning of the space while also challenging the norms embedded in the hegemonic narrative of American national identity (Sorek & White, 2016).

Telos

In the previous section, I focused on the role of space and place in intentionality for *PSR*. Now, I will briefly explore the connection between intentionality for *PSR* and Ridolfo's concept

of *rhetorical velocity*, specifically focusing on the role of *telos*. But first, I'll provide the characteristics of rhetorical velocity that connect it to *PSR*.

In the 'Velocity' section of their webtext "Composing for Recomposition: Rhetorical Velocity and Delivery," Ridolfo and DeVoss (2009) begin by characterizing rhetorical velocity as follows:

1. a strategic approach for composing rhetorical delivery;
2. a way of considering delivery as a rhetorical mode, aligned with an understanding of how texts work as a component of a strategy;
3. the strategic theorizing for how a text might be recomposed (and *why* it might be recomposed) by third parties, and how this recomposing may be useful or not to the short- or long-term rhetorical objectives of the rhetorician.[33]

As stated in chapter 1, in *PSR*, the resistant, tactical act(s) is/are intentionally performed due to an understanding of its/their rhetorical (communicative and persuasive) value and its/their ability to draw attention to the issue at hand, which speaks to #1 and 2 above—and is also addressed in chapter 3's rhetorical analysis. Without asking each performer if they considered how and why their actions might be recomposed, it's difficult to know for certain if they engaged in *PSR* with this aspect of rhetorical velocity in mind. However, I do believe it is possible to analyze each act to determine whether or not each performer *was* successful. As I pivot to briefly consider the

[33]It is important to note that Ridolfo and DeVoss provide this additional description of rhetorical velocity: "As a set of practices rhetorical velocity is, secondly, a term that describes an understanding of how the speed at which information composed to be recomposed travels—that is, it refers to the understanding and rapidity at which information is crafted, delivered, distributed, recomposed, redelivered, redistributed, etc., across physical and virtual networks and spaces." I stipulate that the Black professional athletes' acts of *PSR* discussed in this dissertation may or may not meet this requirement for rhetorical velocity. However, I contend that these athletes do engage in #1 and #2 above in efforts to achieve their short-term rhetorical objectives and as *hopeful acts* aligning with their long-term social objectives.

success of these specific acts of *PSR*, I begin by using the intentionality criteria from *The PSR Puzzle* to examine the acts teleologically:

1. Did each performer meet their goal of engaging in an *individual* protest designed to demonstrate what the performer perceives to be a *specific* social injustice or the *perpetuation* of a social injustice?
2. Did each performer meet their goal of attempt to engage in a *collective* protest by connecting with others who share the same grievances?
3. Did each performer meet their goal of engaging in *PSR* as a hopeful act, one conducted in an effort to be heard by those in power in hopes that they will, ultimately, enact social reforms?

Based on this as the criteria for success, Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick were successful at achieving their short-term rhetorical goals. They were able to use their bodies, their respective venues, and the power of their individual celebrity platforms to draw attention to the plight of Black Americans, engaging in a "rasquachean" approach as discussed in chapter 1. (If you recall a rasquachean is an approach which "encourages practitioners to use what they have at hand" (Medina-López, 2018)). In addition, they effectively demonstrated their connection to the group collective consciousness. In the cases of Rose and Kaepernick, this is evidenced by the subsequent performances of *PSR* by athletes, politicians, and lay people, alike. In the case of Osaka, this connection is evidenced by the responses she received from the family members of victims of police brutality after her acts of *PSR*. Following her U.S. Open wins, Osaka received video messages from Sabrina Fulton, mother of Trayvon Martin, and Marcus Arbery, Sr., father of Ahmaud Arbery, both expressing their appreciation to her for representing their children on her facemasks.

However, if we look at success in terms of rhetorical velocity, we must also consider success within the broader social context of their acts—as long-term objectives. Rose's desire for his son to grow up without having to fear the police (Highkin, 2014), Osaka's desire to "get a conversation started in a majority white sport" (Osaka, 2020) and Kaepernick's call for accountability (Colin Kaepernick transcript, 2016)—these are all individual hopes that speak to the broader social issues that, I contend, are yet to be resolved on a societal or juridical level. Because these types of changes can often only be seen retrospectively, then we have yet to see if these long-term goals will be met.

In the final chapter of this project, I situate *PSR* as a type of unconventional, potentially high-risk form of activism, and I discuss how *PSR* can be used by scholars in (and outside of) the fields of Rhetoric and Technical Communication.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

Throughout the previous chapters of this dissertation, I've attempted to contribute language and a framework (*Performative Symbolic Resistance*) that will support our fields' on-going efforts at acknowledging and understanding the ways that tacit/implicit, experiential knowledge shapes our connection to American identity as well as how that knowledge is made explicit. I began chapter 1 of this dissertation by introducing rhetoric and *TPC* scholars to *Performative Symbolic Resistance (PSR),* a methodological analytical framework situated at the rhetorical interstice where performance and performativity, spaces and places, and resistance meet. I discussed the multiple exigencies that led to the creation of this analytical framework, arguing that there still exists a gap/rhetorical lacking in our fields' language—a lacking that can serve as a non-corporeal gatekeeper by impeding doctoral students' efforts to enter scholarly conversations on their own rhetorical terms and based on their own experiential knowledge. I also presented *The PSR Puzzle*, the elements of which can be used to determine whether a specific resistant act meets the criteria for *PSR.* Chapter 2 built on this discussion by examining literature that helps us understand why—to put it simply—things are the way they are, specifically whereas it pertains to race in the United States. This section took a multi-disciplinary approach to exploring how Blackness is theorized in this country, focusing on the social, societal, and juridical elements that have historically and continuously worked to shape and perpetuate this theorization—such as racial and social contracts, inscription, and inscriptive practices. It also focused on the experiential nature of knowledge construction, which directly impacts the tactics used to engage in resistant acts such as *PSR*.

Chapter 3 showed *The PSR Puzzle* in action. I used it to conduct an in-depth rhetorical

analysis of the protest efforts of three Black professional athletes—Derrick Rose's 2014 garment activism, Naomi Osaka's 2020 garment activism, and Colin Kaepernick's 2016 kneeling activism. Using *The PSR Puzzle* as a guide, this analysis focused on the players' resistant acts in terms of 1) their performance and/or performativity, 2) their use of their bodies as symbols of resistance, and 3) their choice of a specific space and/or place in which to conduct their protest. As it was designed to do, *The PSR Puzzle*—when used as a data collection tool—allowed me to describe and discuss the various elements at work (in tandem) during each athlete's act(s) of *PSR*.

For me, the most surprising finding of my analysis is presented in the *Symbolizing Divergent Understandings of American-ness* section. It was this analysis that helped me see Colin Kaepernick's *PSR* differently. As I analyzed its evolution from sitting to kneeling, I was left wondering *why*? *Why did he change how he protested?* Working through that question allowed me to consider the ways that protest efforts can be influenced by those who 1) don't understand the issue at hand and/or 2) don't share the same sentiment as the protestor. Chapter 4 expanded on chapter 3 by offering a critical analysis of each athlete's activism, specifically focusing on the role of intentionality. I used this as an opportunity to explore the inherent connection between intentionality and *PSR*. I provided a definition of intentionality specifically *for PSR*, and then focused on two specific elements that impact *PSR*'s effectiveness: 1) the protestor's ability to change the place's meaning and 2) telos.

Taking a Risk—*PSR* as an Individual and Unconventional Act

For Black professional athletes participating in *PSR*, their choices to engage in *PSR* carry risk because they are individual acts. Engaging in a lone act of individual resistance makes the voyeuristic "zoom lens" to which Patricia Williams refers even more focused, which carries with

it the potential of risk to and for the individual. To examine the significance of risk in this context, I turn to the field of sociology and examine its work on social movements and civil resistance. In "Individual Protest Participation in the United States: Conventional and Unconventional Activism," sociologist Joseph DiGarzia (2014) distinguishes activism by providing two divergent categorizations: 1) as conventional—actions that are seen as politically legitimate and low risk, or 2) as unconventional—actions that are seen as politically illegitimate and carry higher risks (p. 113). One piece of data that DiGarzia explores—and that I find particularly relevant to *PSR*—comes from Cohen and Valencia (2008). Using data from the World Values Survey (WVS)[34] [35], Cohen and Valencia examined protest events in terms of their risk factor. Focusing specifically on unsanctioned or illegal protests (unofficial strikes and occupation of buildings) versus sanctioned or lawful demonstrations (boycotts), they found that risk played a critical rule in determining which types of protest people participate in. According to their data, approximately 5% of the participants engaged in unconventional—or high risk—protest events (5.43% of the sample participated in unofficial strikes and 4.56% of the sample participated in the occupation of buildings) (p. 114). By contrast, over 21% of participants engaged in conventional—or low-risk—protest events (25.41 participated in boycotts and 21.72% participated in lawful demonstrations) (p. 114). This data focuses on specific types of protests (strikes, occupations of buildings, boycotts, lawful demonstrations); however, I contend that the unsanctioned nature of *PSR* makes the choice to engage in it a high-risk decision, situating it firmly as a type of unconventional activism.

[34] The **World Values Survey (WVS)** is an international research program devoted to the scientific and academic study of social, political, economic, religious and cultural values of people in the world. The project's goal is to assess which impact values stability or change over time has on the social, political and economic development of countries and societies. More information about this program can be found on their website: https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp.

[35] Even though the WVS data is based on an international study, the data used in this specific study comes from the U.S. portion of the fourth wave of the WVS collected in the year 2000.

If we look at unconventional activism as unsanctioned protest, then the *PSR* of Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick fit the category. However, if we look at risk in terms of dollars and cents, then it's likely that—of the three athletes being discussed in this dissertation—Osaka would be least likely to incur significant risk. Because not all tennis organizations have official rules when it comes to attire, then there is a greater degree of flexibility regarding what type of garments can be worn before and during matches. However, after Rose wore his "I CAN'T BREATHE" t-shirt, NBA Commissioner Adam Silver was quoted as stating, "I respect Derrick Rose and all of our players for voicing their personal views on important issues but my preference would be for players to abide by our on-court attire rules" (Boren, 2014). According to Paul Lukas (2014) of *ESPN*, the on-court attire rules stipulate that players are supposed wear team-issued shooting shirts; however, *ESPN*'s Jeremy Schaap confirmed that there would be no fines for players who wore the "I CAN'T BREATHE" t-shirt (Rose and the NBA players that followed suit). For NBA basketball players like Rose, there *was* the possibility—and still is, as long as dress codes remain a part of the sport—for him to be penalized monetarily.

However, Kaepernick's acts of *PSR* have come to epitomize unconventional activism. Not only were they unsanctioned, but they were extremely high-risk in multiple ways. Trump continued an unrelenting tirade against Kaepernick and his protest efforts throughout his presidency, during which time Kaepernick jerseys were burned in effigy, Kaepernick dolls were seen hanging from a barber shop ceiling and being drug behind a truck, and he lost his job as a professional football player. The fan reaction—as telling as it was—would not necessarily be considered high risk in terms of dollars and cents. However, the loss of his football career would be.

In his 2020 op-ed, *CNN* political analyst Joe Lockhart—who was the NFL's vice

president of communications during Kaepernick's kneeling activism—discussed the concept of risk from the perspective of NFL owners, who saw signing Kaepernick as "bad for business":

> An executive from one team that considered signing Kaepernick told me the team projected losing 20% of their season ticket holders if they did. That was a business risk no team was willing to take…As bad of an image problem it presented for the league and the game, no owner was willing to put the business at risk over this issue. (Kozlowski, 2020)

Rose, Osaka, and Kaepernick each engaged in *PSR*; yet there was only minimal discussion about Rose and some slight criticism of Osaka on social media. Even though Kaepernick was willing to engage in unconventional protest against racial violence and police brutality, NFL owners were not willing to risk their own dollars and cents to support his efforts. Kaepernick's activism and his willingness to engage in *PSR* came at a much higher cost—that being his career

Why the Fields of Rhetoric and Technical Communication Need Performative Symbolic Resistance

Performative Symbolic Resistance is a singular "set of related terms" that does the work of encapsulating the individual elements of an act of resistance while simultaneously speaking to the multi-faceted nature of a single resistant act. It shifts the way we initially perceive a resistant act by shifting the way we first conceive it. This revised perception/conceptualization shift—a shift that allows us to envision a resistant act as more than the *sum* of its parts—directly aligns with Butler's quest for language that offers a more comprehensive way of understanding resistant acts, acts that have previously been thought about, written about, analyzed, and discussed primarily as part and parcel. Within the context of this dissertation, I intentionally situate *PSR* as a way to help decolonialize our thinking about resistant acts performed specifically by Black professional athletes, thereby shifting the way these acts are perceived,

interrogated, understood, and discussed. However, *Performative Symbolic Resistance* also contributes to the general body of our fields' scholarship that seeks to decolonize how we think about, write about, analyze, and discuss acts that are inherently resistant—e.g. Shelton's techné of marginality, Davis' memetic rhetorical theory, Frost's apparent feminism, Jones, Moore, and Walton's antenarrative, and Frost and Eble's work on technical rhetorics. As such, I first offer three specific ways *Performative Symbolic Resistance* can benefit those of us in the fields of Rhetoric and Technical and Professional Communication.

1. *PSR can help us re-shape and broaden individual and collective perceptions of rhetoric and technical communication by helping us glean a more comprehensive, less limiting understanding of what knowledge looks like, and*
2. *Having such a framework at our disposal and working with it forces us, as scholars, to wrestle with and think through our own perspectives about resistance, resistant acts, the bodies that perform them, and the types of resistant acts and bodies to which we attribute (or don't attribute) value.*
3. *Having such a framework at our disposal and working with it forces us, as scholars, to wrestle with and think through our own perspectives about how places and spaces are used by marginalized populations to engage in resistance/resistant acts.*

A prime example of recent scholarship that has re-shaped and broadened perceptions of knowledge is Dr. A.D. Carson's dissertation in which he combined his way of seeing and commenting on the world with the standard requirements of a dissertation. Using the linguistic tools acquired outside of academia, tools that are embedded in hip-hop and Black culture, Carson created a dissertation at Clemson University in the form of a 34-song album, which he describes as "a critical-theoretical reflection on personhood vis-à-vis Black bodies and Black lives" that "does the work through the genre of hip-hop" instead of theorizing about hip-hop (p. 14). He

stated, “This archive argues for attentiveness to historical and contemporary social justice issues, particularly Blackness as it pertains to embodied and disembodied voice and performance, through hip-hop lyrics and spoken-word poetry” (p. 14). By using the academic space and his culturally cultivated literacies to engage in this type of embodied rhetorical performance, his body became activated as a technology, a tool used for the sharing of information. In his work *Digital Griots*, Banks (2011) emphasizes the existing connection between the physical learning spaces (Young’s focus on K-12 and Carson’s focus on universities), technology, and literacy. He states, “In the pursuit of greater equality in our education system, from K to PhD, technology access, print literacies, and the verbal skill all collide for even basic in an information-based, technology-dependent economy and society” (p. 5). Carson’s work exhibits all of these elements, working together to create a linguistic/technological/cultural interstice.

Additionally, Carson’s use of hip-hop in academia connects with Richardson’s (2006) work on hiphop literacies and aligns with Smitherman’s (2006) work on African American Language (AAL). Like Richardson, Smitherman refutes the common notion that Black language is nothing more than “broken English” (p. 3). It is, instead, “a style of speaking English words with Black flava—with Africanized semantic, grammatical, pronunciation, and rhetorical patterns” (p. 3). She continues: “AAL comes out of the experience of U.S. slave descendants. This shared experience has resulted in common speaking styles, systemic patterns of grammar, and common language practices in the Black community” (p. 3). It is this connection thru lived experience that creates the connection between the language and the culture, which is ultimately reflected in the works of artist/scholars like A.D. Carson and scholars like April Baker-Bell (*Linguistic Justice*, 2020).

Carson’s work also speaks to Young’s ideas on code-meshing. Young’s (2013) ideas

about 1) value being found in our culturally crafted methods of communicating and 2) that they are valuable within the traditional classroom context are evidenced by/in the work of Carson. Even so, Carson acknowledges what Young also knows—that the academic space does not necessarily welcome knowledge *or* ways of conveying it that do not align with traditionally-prescribed notions of knowledge or methods of knowledge conveyance. Gilyard (2011) situates this issue historically in his discussion of literacy, stating that "If literacy his historically been defined as White property in the United States, then obviously millions of people who are not White and also not African American have been victims of linguistic and educational discrimination" (p. 183). It is this understanding that shapes Carson's own concerns about language and knowledge conveyance in an academic space. He states the following:

> While the study of hip-hop has helped push through boundaries posed by many academic conventions, the performance of some of its cultural products tend to exist on the margins of what is considered "proper" scholarly engagement in the disciplines in which it is studied, which works to reproduce certain forms of – and assumptions about – knowledge production regarding hip-hop. (p. 14)

Carson argues that there is a direct conflict between his method of constructing and presenting knowledge and what methods of knowledge-construction and dissemination are construed as "proper" or legitimate in a scholarly sense. His method of discourse—hip-hop—which Richardson (2006) describes as "a discourse system within the universe of Black discourse" (p. 1), is rooted in, shaped by, and a demonstration of his cultural ways of constructing knowledge; yet, it often suffers in the face of traditionally constructed, "legitimate" scholarship. Carson's statement speaks to the way that knowledge has been historically construed in this country and the fact that the world of academia has historically linked knowledge—what counts for

knowledge as well as who can produce and share it—to certain bodies. He also writes about the "margins of what is considered 'proper' scholarly engagement." I contend that these "margins" pertain not only to the type of work that is deemed acceptable and how it is situated in relationship to "legitimate" scholarship but also to the physical margins historically associated with knowledge production (i.e. brick and mortar schools and universities).

But how can thinking about margins in this way create opportunities for us to consider the rhetorical nature of academic spaces and places? Endres and Senda-Cook (2011) take up the task of examining the rhetorical nature of *place* in their article "Location Matters: The Rhetoric of Place in Protest." In this article, they present the concept of "place in protest," offering it as "a heuristic framework…for theorizing the rhetorical force of place and its relationship to social movements" (p. 257). They explore how the "(re)construction of place may be considered a rhetorical tactic," describing how protest events can create "temporary fissures in the dominant meaning of places" (p. 257). By examining the role places play in social movements and activism, the authors conceptualize place as a rhetorical artifact that is both material and symbolic (p. 261). Even though the authors focus on group protests, I contend that *place in protest* can and should be a heuristic used to analyze individual protest efforts, even (and perhaps especially) resistant acts that may not be overtly labeled as protest. From this perspective, Carson's work (and this also speaks to my work on *PSR*) becomes a site for analysis through this heuristic. By creating a work that pushes against the traditional dissertation conventions, he, like Kaepernick, "…makes visible what had no business being seen," he "makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise," and he "makes understood as discourse what was once only heard as noise" (Rancière, 1999). In doing so, he engages in and becomes the physical manifestation of an "unruly rhetoric" (Alexander et al, 2018).

How Can *PSR* Be Used? Analytical (academic), Pedagogy (teaching), and Practice (*PSR* is to be used by particular people)

The implications for this framework's use suggest that it can function as a theory, methodology, and a pedagogy, and explanatory framework. As a theory it will provide the terms and concepts that allow us to explore the ways bodies and spaces are used to engage in and as resistant rhetorics. This is important for scholars in Rhetoric and Technical and Professional Communication, especially in light of the fact that our rhetorical roots are most often attributed to Aristotle, and our understanding of technical communication has been historically rooted in the field of engineering (Connors, 1982). As a methodology, it provides an analytical tool (*The PSR Puzzle*) specifically designed to help us consider how the various aspects of our individual selves can be used for tactical responses to on-going social issues. As a pedagogy, it contributes to tools we, as scholars, can use to engage in reflexivity, which should be a part of our on-going pedagogical practices. And it can also be used as an explanatory framework by institutions (such as law enforcement) because it explains specific performances and what they mean in specific contexts.[36]

As with any new framework, there are also parameters to be considered. *PSR* is inherently malleable and can—in some way(s)—be used to analyze the resistant acts of marginalized populations generally; it also requires a nuanced understanding of its underpinnings before it can be deployed. For example, it's vital that those who use it for analysis understand that it is rooted in the Black experience in this country and cannot be separated from it. Any analysis using this framework must begin by grounding it in the Black experience. It is also vital

[36] My appreciation goes out to Ebony Young for posing the questions, "Can *PSR* be used in reverse? For example, can it be used by law enforcement?" It was these thought-provoking questions that lead me to consider that *PSR* can also be used as an explanatory framework.

for those who use it to understand that it is grounded in our understanding of racial and social contracts, hegemony, inscription, inscriptive practices, and the implicit knowledge that results from these. It isn't simply a matter of looking at the who, what, when, where, or why of a protest or resistant act—it is having a clear understanding of how social and societal structures have historically and continuously remained a boot on the neck of those from marginalized communities. Haas and Eble (2018) state that "…we [technical communicators] must interrogate how we may be complicit in, implicated by, and/or transgress the oppressive colonial and capitalistic influences…" (p. 4), and scholars should not attempt to use *PSR* if they are not ready to look at how their own individual practices may contribute to these types of oppressions—oppressions that acts of *PSR* confront.

What I envision for *Performative Symbolic Resistance* generally, then, is that it will 1) provide a *single phrase* that connects performance/performativity, symbols, and resistant acts, helping us view them as a *singular idea*, and 2) will serve as an *interstice-tic framework and a rhetorical space* that can be used to examine, analyze, discuss, and describe what occurs when people use their bodies *and* spaces to engage in resistant acts. In doing so, *Performative Symbolic Resistance* begins filling the rhetorical and analytical void addressed by Butler (2015), a void of language that speaks to the relationship between the human body, infrastructures, and the political struggle. Even though I've intentionally used *PSR* to examine the resistant acts of individual celebrity athletes for this project, *PSR* should be understood to be a living concept that is constantly changing, adapting, and shifting due to the performance of the actor(s). Its adaptability allows it to be used in a variety of ways and contexts to "make apparent the urgent and sometimes hidden exigencies" of marginalized peoples (Frost, 2016, p.5). However, in order for this to occur, it is essential that rhetors 1) be open to recognizing the creation of technical

communication in different places, spaces, and by those of different races and ethnicities, and 2) be open to understanding the technical nature of resistant rhetorics. So if social justice *is* the goal, then we—much like the Black professional athletes presented in this dissertation—must be willing to take risks, using our own platforms to create opportunities for the voices of those from marginalized populations to become unmuted—both in and outside of academic spaces.

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